



# Episcopal Diocese

— OF CENTRAL FLORIDA —



# Policies for Abuse Prevention & Response

A Guide for Clergy, Staff & Volunteers  
Adopted: March 2026

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	No Tolerance for Abuse.....	4
II.	Foundation: Our Christian Faith .....	4
III.	Definitions of Abuse and Harassment .....	4
IV.	Administrative Policy.....	8
V.	Community Conduct Expectations .....	10
VI.	Responding to Policy Violations and Concerns .....	17
VII.	Reporting Policy.....	17
VIII.	Response Protocols .....	19
IX.	Retaliation.....	22
X.	Trauma-Informed Care .....	22
XI.	Known Offender Policy .....	24
XII.	Appendices.....	26
	Appendix 1: Diocesan Training Plan (updated every three years).....	26
	Appendix 2: Potential Indicators of Child Abuse .....	28
	Appendix 3: Model Condensed Parish Policy .....	30
	Appendix 4: Sample Application Form .....	39
	Appendix 5: Suggested Interview Questions .....	44
	Appendix 6: Suggested Questions for References .....	45
	Appendix 7: Background Inquiry Release Form.....	46
	Appendix 8: Signed Agreement for Persons Working with Children and Youth .....	48
	Appendix 9: Signed Agreement for Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships.....	50
	Appendix 10: Child Safety Incident Report/Notice of Concern Forms .....	52
	Appendix 11: General Recommendations for Safety on Student Trips .....	58
	Appendix 12: Recommendations for Safety Talks .....	60
	Appendix 13: Recommendations for Supporting a Victim of Intimate Partner Violence Terrorism.....	65
	Appendix 14: Example, Limited Access Agreement.....	69
	Appendix 15: Documentation Form for Knowledge of Suspected/ Disclosed Abuse .....	71
	Appendix 16: Known Offender Accountability Plan .....	73

Appendix 17: Key Assignment Agreement.....75  
Appendix 18: Suggested Guidelines for Providing Counseling ..... 76  
Appendix 19: Suggested Guidelines for Office Decor ..... 77

## I. No Tolerance for Abuse

The Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida stands against any and all forms of abuse. Those who use any position of power to abuse as defined by this policy may be restricted from serving in any formal role of power within the Diocese of Central Florida. For those who show amendment of life, one must provide empirical and evident repentance and transformation for a minimum of five years before petitioning for review to serve or minister in a church within the Diocese of Central Florida.

## II. Foundation: Our Christian Faith

The Diocese of Central Florida is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors and holding abusers accountable. By virtue of baptism, all members of the Church are called to holiness of life and accountability to one another. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Ps. 9:9, 12). Our community seeks to embody Jesus' priority of justice for the vulnerable, especially children.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime) that occurs when someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. Abuse is, sadly, a common reality in this world. As Christians we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about its reality. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents" (Matt. 10:16). We all must become educated about abuse and take responsibility to uphold our policy.

Our goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse by becoming a community that is educated about various forms of abuse and common dynamics, clarifying appropriate boundaries, and doing the hard work of holding each other accountable. All persons should experience an environment of safety and justice, one that is free from any form of abuse.

By its very nature, our community includes interaction with vulnerable children and adults. Sadly, many within the church have acted in predatory ways toward vulnerable people, and bad actors will often seek environments with vulnerable people. Abuse in all its forms is almost always perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Abusers utilize a variety of tactics to gain trust, deceive both victims and others within a community and keep the abuse secret. This policy only states what we must all take ownership of in our community as we together walk with God, who loves justice and defends the vulnerable.

## III. Definitions of Abuse and Harassment

**Abuse:** In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g., bishop, priest, deacon, vestry member, school administrator, boss, mentor, supervisor, teacher, parent, adult,

older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable (e.g., a child; someone who is sick, elderly or disabled; a student; employee; intern; immigrant, etc.). That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms, such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc. (See Appendix 2 for Potential Indicators of Child Abuse.)

**Child/Student/Youth:** any person 17 or younger, still in high school or legally incompetent.

**Clergy Sexual Abuse:** sexual abuse (see above) by clergy, bishop, priest, deacon or other leader holding formal spiritual authority with a person under their spiritual care and/or supervision, whether an adult or a child. It is an abuse of power whether criminalized by state law or not.

**Emotional Abuse:** when a person holding power and trust uses a pattern of controlling and domineering behaviors such as shaming, insulting, degrading, intimidating, threatening, humiliating and/or domineering. “Bullying” is a common term for acts that typically constitute emotional abuse.

**Financial Abuse:** the illegal or improper use of a vulnerable person or their financial resources for another’s profit or advantage. Some examples of financial abuse may include: the taking of money or property; forging a signature; getting a person to sign a deed, will or power of attorney through deception, coercion or undue influence; or illegally or improperly adding names to bank accounts or safety deposit boxes. The elderly, in particular, are often targeted for financial abuse.

**Intimate Partner Violence (Domestic Violence):** a pattern of behavior where a person in or who has been in an intimate relationship uses tactics of control, belittling, isolation, fear, stalking and/or intimidation to dominate, harm, degrade or otherwise undermine the worth and agency (capacity to act) of the other person in the relationship. Intimate partner violence can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, social or financial.<sup>1</sup>

**Non-Contact Sexual Acts:**

- observing a person’s nudity or sexual activity or allowing a person to observe sexual activity.
- recording, photographing, transmitting, showing, viewing, streaming or distributing intimate or sexual images, audio recordings or sexual information of persons.
- exposing one’s genitals or inducing a person to expose their own genitals.
- communicating sexual desire, engaging in sexual conversation or sharing sexual content within a power dynamic (clergy-parishioner, boss-employee, teacher-student, adult-child).

A child cannot consent to any sexual behavior with an adult or older child. An adult under the authority, care or mentorship of clergy (e.g., bishop, priest, deacon) cannot consent to sexual activity.

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information and examples, an excellent resource is The Duluth Model at [theduluthmodel.org/wheels/](http://theduluthmodel.org/wheels/).

Even when both people are adults and the contact is not forcible, any crossing of sexual boundaries within a power structure is not an “affair” or a “relationship” but an egregious abuse of power. Adult sexual abusers often develop an emotional and spiritual connection and then exploit it. While not always recognized as a crime according to state laws, this is a serious violation, and the Diocese of Central Florida will treat it as such. If any clergy wishes to pursue a consensual romantic relationship with someone under their spiritual care or a power hierarchy within, they must contact the diocesan office for the sake of transparency and to discuss any appropriate boundaries, given the power dynamics or other factors. Any non-clergy staff in a parish who wishes to pursue a consensual romantic relationship with someone under their supervision or in a power hierarchy should contact the rector and vestry. The rector and vestry may consult with the diocesan office for support in such situations.

**Physical Abuse:** nonaccidental physical injury (ranging from bruises to severe fractures or death) by way of bodily contact (such as slapping, punching, pushing, beating, kicking, shaking or striking with an object) or non-injurious contact with the goal or effect of intimidating, threatening or controlling.

**Sexual Abuse:** The canons of The Episcopal Church state that sexual abuse is “any Sexual Behavior at the request of, acquiesced to or by a person eighteen years of age or older and a person under eighteen years of age, in high school or legally incompetent.” We expand that to include those situations when a person in a place of power and/or trust engages in sexual behavior with a child, vulnerable adult or an adult under their supervision, authority, mentoring or spiritual care, including coercion and exploitation.

**Sexual Assault:** sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the consent of the victim. Sexual harassment generally violates civil laws – all have a right to work or learn without being harassed – but in many cases is not a criminal act (see more on harassment below). Sexual assault usually refers to acts that are criminal. Some forms of sexual assault include:

- Penetration of the victim’s body, also known as rape.
- Attempted rape.
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts such as oral sex or penetration of the perpetrator’s body.
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching.

“Consent” refers to words or overt actions indicating a freely given agreement to the sexual act or contact. Silence or the absence of an explicit “no” does not equal consent. Physical submission by the victim – such as “freezing” or “fawning” in fear – does not equal consent. Consent also implies the ability to say no in a mutual relationship: Children, certain vulnerable adults (based on functioning related to factors such as intellectual disabilities, age, mental health or other vulnerabilities) or those

within a power differential (e.g., with a religious leader, mentor, teacher or supervisor) are unable to consent to sexual activity. Other circumstances such as intoxication or unconsciousness also render a person unable to give consent to sexual activity.<sup>2</sup> Deception or manipulation of a person also renders that person unable to consent.

**Sexual Contact:** any intentional touching of a person's breasts, buttocks, groin, genitals or other intimate parts. Touching may be over or under clothing and may include touching, forcing the person to touch or forcing the person to touch their own body. This also includes contact with nonsexual areas of the body for the sexual gratification of the perpetrator (such as with certain paraphilic disorders).

**Sexual Harassment:** The legal definition of sexual harassment by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1980) is "Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment.
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual.
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment."

Beyond the legal definition, harassment – sexual or otherwise – can also occur in a community, conference or event when the people involved are not employees of the church. In accord with our values, sexual harassment is not restricted to what is defined as sexual harassment under the law. The Diocese of Central Florida considers any unwanted sexualized behavior or sexualized behavior within a power differential to be a serious form of harassment (including unwanted touch or communication, other unwanted sexual attention or any behavior that objectifies or degrades). Other common forms of harassment include bullying and acts of discrimination. Harassment can include discrimination against a specific group of people based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status or parental status.

**Sexual Penetration:** any act or attempted act of vaginal or anal penetration, however slight, by a person's penis, finger, other body part or object, and/or any oral-genital contact.

---

<sup>2</sup> For more discussion on consent including state laws, see [rainn.org/articles/legal-role-consent](http://rainn.org/articles/legal-role-consent) and [rainn.org/take-action/fight-for-justice/state-law-database/](http://rainn.org/take-action/fight-for-justice/state-law-database/).

**Spiritual Abuse:** a form of emotional abuse, meaning a pattern of coercive or domineering behaviors using religion, usually by a person who holds power and trust. Many acts of abuse in a religious environment will have a spiritual dimension. Examples include:

- Use of religious ideology, precepts, tradition or sacred texts to harm.
- (Compelling) Coercing or exploiting a person to engage in religious acts against their will.
- Abuse that occurs in a religious context or by a religious leader.
- Invoking of divine authority to manipulate a person into meeting the needs of the abuser.
- Using spirituality or spiritual authority to dismiss a person's perspective, agency or value.
- Attempts to use the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology or spirituality to put their leadership or decisions beyond questioning or accountability.
- Attempts to spiritualize or justify harm using the divine, sacred texts, sacred tradition, theology, spirituality or withholding the sacraments in a way that is not in line with the Book of Common Prayer.

**Stalking:** a pattern of unwanted, fixated and obsessive behavior that is intrusive and causes fear of violence, alarm or distress. Stalking is a terrifying reality and is now recognized as a crime in all 50 states. Examples of stalking (from the U.S. Department of Justice's Stalking Victimization Survey) include:

- Making unwanted phone calls/texts or sending unwanted messages or emails.
- Following or spying on the victim.
- Showing up or waiting at places without a legitimate reason.
- Leaving unwanted items, presents or flowers.
- Posting information or spreading false or confidential information about a person or victim on the internet, in a public place or by word of mouth.

**Vulnerable Adult:** A vulnerable adult is an adult who, by reason of age and/or intellectual disability, cannot fully provide for their own care or protection.

## IV. Administrative Policy

### **Safe Church Teams**

Each rector, vicar or priest-in-charge shall establish a Parish Safe Church Team. The Parish Safe Church Team is responsible for equipping the parish to live out the policy of the diocese. The Parish Safe Church Team is typically three to six members and is recommended to be at least 50% women. The team may be comprised of a mix of clergy and laity at the discretion of the rector in consultation with the vestry or chapter. Each rector and vestry shall make the team known within the parish. In

smaller parishes, the vestry will typically serve as the Safe Church Team. Each parochial school administration shall use its discretion to establish an appropriate Safety Team to facilitate compliance with this policy. Nonparochial schools may use this policy if their board chooses to do so.

### **Duties of the Parish Safe Church Team**

- Implement and oversee compliance with the DCF Abuse Policy.
- Maintain rigorous familiarity with the DCF Abuse Policy.
- Brief all staff, volunteers and members on the application of the policy on a regular basis.
- Work with the rector and vestry to implement required training in the DCF Abuse Policy.
- Conduct or coordinate screening of non-clergy parish employees and volunteers.
- Receive, document and respond to any policy violations or concerning behavior (see below).
- Assist in responding to any allegations of abuse (see below).
- Complete continuing education from a qualified organization annually and help leaders with an ongoing education plan for the whole church.

The Diocesan Safe Church Team is led by the canon to the ordinary. The Diocesan Safe Church Team is responsible for supporting each parish in living out the policies of the Diocese of Central Florida. The Diocesan Safe Church Team shall receive all reports of potential clergy misconduct (see below).

### **Screening**

The Diocese of Central Florida shall utilize the following screening tools for all clergy, employees or volunteers whose ministry includes pastoral relations (e.g., Lay Eucharistic Visitors, Stephen Ministers, etc.), volunteers who regularly work around children/students/vulnerable adults and supervisors and decision-makers (e.g., Standing Committee members, Diocesan Board members, vestries, boards of directors for schools):

- The completion of a written application, including questions related to abuse and protecting the vulnerable.
- An interview that explores a candidate's written application and includes questions related to abuse, protecting the vulnerable and the DCF Abuse Policy.
- At least three references to be contacted with at least one contact outside the church for paid employees (two for volunteers who work with children or vulnerable adults, one for volunteers who do not directly supervise children or vulnerable adults). These references should include:
  - Previous employers (for employees and clergy) and any work with survivors or vulnerable persons.
  - At least one reference not supplied directly by the applicant (for clergy and employees).
- A background check that includes the following information:

- Confirmation of education and employment (for employees and clergy).
- Criminal records check.
- State central child/dependent adult abuse registry check.
- State sex offender registry check.
- An internet and social media search.
- Driving history for staff or volunteer leaders whose responsibilities will include driving others.
- Credit history for staff whose responsibilities will include handling money.

If the screening process yields information that an individual abused a child or others in any way or has been convicted of a violent and/or sexual crime, that individual may not work with children or vulnerable adults in any capacity. If any potentially concerning information comes to light or if the screening process shows a candidate has ever been accused or convicted of any type of crime, the church may consult with an expert to help assess the situation.

All clergy; employees; volunteers whose ministry includes pastoral relations (e.g., Lay Eucharistic Visitors, Stephen Ministers, etc.); volunteers who regularly work around children/students/vulnerable adults; supervisors; and decision-makers (e.g., Standing Committee members, Diocesan Board members, vestries, Boards of Directors for schools) are expected to inform the appropriate parish Safe Church Team if any of their information in the screening process changes in any way as it relates to conduct addressed in this policy. Background checks, including the criminal check and child abuse registry check, will be repeated every five years.

### **Training**

The Diocesan Training Plan (see Appendix 1) developed by the Diocesan Safe Church Team will be implemented in each parish. Compliance will be overseen by each Parish Safe Church Team. The educational plan will prioritize independent expertise as well as regular internal briefings on our policy. See Appendix 1 for minimal training requirements for different groups.

### **Confidentiality and Privacy Practices**

The standards of Title IV, Canon 4 of The Episcopal Church related to confidences shall apply, that a member of the clergy shall “respect and preserve confidences of others except that pastoral, legal or moral obligations of ministry may require disclosure of those confidences other than Privileged Communications.”

## **V. Community Conduct Expectations**

The Diocese of Central Florida is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for all. Everyone in a parish has a responsibility to uphold safety and healthy boundaries

in the community. Jesus commanded us to treat others as we would want to be treated. The following are the safe and healthy boundaries that everyone within our diocese is responsible to uphold.

### **Community Expectations for Everyone**

- No touch can be healthy if it is forced or unwanted by the person receiving it. Those in power are especially advised to ensure that those with less power understand that they have a right to say no to any unwanted touch. Also, see examples below of touches that are always inappropriate with minors and vulnerable adults.
- Touch within a significant power difference should be observable to others (e.g., between an adult and a child, clergy and a vulnerable adult).
- Children who need a diaper change or assistance in the restroom outside of the children's ministry procedure (see below) must be helped by their own parent or guardian.
- Stay in visible and accountable spaces: No one should be alone with a child who is not their own (including giving rides or messaging via text or social media).
- Use words that convey respect; avoid any words that belittle or threaten. In a power differential, avoid any sexualized comments, including jokes, stories, experiences or sharing sexualized content (such as images, video or other media) or engaging in any other sexualized communication.

### ***More Specific Expectations for Clergy, Employees, and Volunteers toward Minors and Vulnerable Adults***

It is especially incumbent that clergy, staff and volunteers within the diocese be exemplary with regard to safe interactions with all, and especially those who are more vulnerable. When creating safe boundaries for children, students and vulnerable adults, it is important to establish what types of affection are appropriate and inappropriate; otherwise, that decision is left to each individual. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows church personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with children and youth. The guidelines are based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by bad actors to groom children, youth and their parents for future abuse. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by all church personnel working around or with children, students and vulnerable adults. Love and affection are part of church life and ministry. There are many ways to demonstrate affection while maintaining positive and safe boundaries with children and youth. Some positive and appropriate forms of affection – as long as they are welcome by the person and observable by others – are listed below:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Handshakes.
- High fives and hand slapping.
- Verbal praise.

- Touching hands, faces, shoulders and arms of children or youth.
- Arms around shoulders.
- Holding hands while walking with young children.
- Sitting beside young children.
- Kneeling or bending down for hugs with young children.
- Holding hands during prayer.
- Pats on the head when culturally appropriate (for example, this gesture should typically be avoided in some Asian communities).

The following forms of affection are considered inappropriate with children and youth in ministry settings because many of them are the behaviors child molesters use to groom children or youth for later molestation or can be – in and of themselves – sexual abuse.

- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Kisses on the mouth.
- Holding children over 3 years old on the lap.
- Touching bottoms, chests or genital areas other than for appropriate diapering or toileting of infants and toddlers (see more below).
- Showing affection in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms.
- Occupying a bed with a child or youth.
- Touching knees or legs of children or youth.
- Wrestling with children or youth.
- Tickling children or youth.
- Piggyback rides.
- Hugs from behind.
- Any type of massage given by a child or youth to an adult.
- Any type of massage given by an adult to a child or youth.
- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written or electronic) related to physique or body development. Examples include, “You sure are developing,” or “You look really hot in those jeans.”
- Any conversation regarding romantic interest, either present or in the future. Those who work with students are never to think of them as potential romantic interest at any time in the present or future.
- Snapping bras, giving “wedgies” or similar touching of underwear, regardless of whether it is covered by other clothing.
- Giving gifts or money to individual children or youth.
- Private meals with individual children or youth in non-public places.

Because a large percentage of child abuse occurs in isolation from others, our church requires a minimum of two unrelated adults to supervise all ministry involving children and youth including, but not limited to, Sunday morning and Wednesday night classes and off-site official church events. Our ratios for the supervision of young children will follow the recommended guidelines of our state. All adults serving in our ministry with children and youth should set an example to bring transparency and accountability to any close interactions with children. Our church prohibits its volunteers and staff from spending time with children alone – even with a caregiver’s consent or a supervisor’s knowledge – including in a private home or any other setting.

All diapering and assistance in the restroom shall be done by a parent or by two unrelated adults who are approved to serve in the ministry. All diapering and assistance shall be conducted with disposable gloves to prevent any skin-to-skin contact and to promote good hygiene.

Any private communication between an adult and an unrelated child, or between a child and an older child in a different stage of development, is prohibited. This includes interaction via text, social media or other private forms of electronic communication. Any private communication initiated by an adult toward a youth is a serious boundary violation. If a youth messages you privately, document it with a member of the Parish Safe Church Team, gently remind the student of the policy and direct them to an appropriate way to connect soon. The Parish Safe Church Team will follow up with any appropriate actions, such as informing parents. This does not mean one-on-one conversations can never occur within student ministry. However, such conversations must be done in such a way that the interaction is visible and observable to others. Each parish must decide when and how these will occur so they can be done safely and make the standards clear to all.

Any education about sexuality will occur with prior approval and notice through the Parish Safe Church Team and church leadership. Parents will be notified ahead of time. Our Parish Safe Church Team will conduct regular safety talks on various aspects of prevention, including appropriate boundaries and consent.

We acknowledge that sexual communication and sharing sexual content is a common grooming tactic by offenders. As such, our community prohibits the following, especially directed toward children:

- Sexually suggestive language or slang, sexual jokes, sexual innuendo, descriptions of sexual experiences/habits.
- Sharing or displaying of any sexual images, videos or other content.
- Music, videos games and movies with inappropriate sexual themes.

When the correction of children is necessary, adults should avoid any form of harsh language, including shaming, humiliation or yelling. No physical punishment is allowed, period. Any serious issues of misconduct by children should be brought to the attention of parents and church leadership. Our church encourages positive verbal interactions, including:

- Encouragement.
- Kind words.
- Positive reinforcement.
- Appropriate jokes.

At the beginning of each ministry year, parents will register any child who attends activities and programs. The registration will record who may safely pick up a child from an event, any allergies the child has, medical concerns the church needs to know about and physician to contact in case of an emergency.

Attendance will be taken at all events. Once children's attendance is recorded for an event, it is the church's responsibility to supervise those children from the time they are dropped off until the time they are picked up by an authorized caregiver. Children in second grade and above can be released without parental sign-out on Sunday morning and Wednesday night on-site activities.

Staff and volunteers are prohibited from displaying favoritism towards a child or group of children. Staff may not give gifts to individual children unless the gifts are:

- Able to be given to other children at other times for similar reasons (e.g., gifts to graduating seniors; a new Bible for students entering middle school; end of the year thank-you gifts to older teens who volunteered in a ministry).
- Signed from the church rather than the individual staff member.
- Given together with another staff member.

Any overnight trips involving children or youth must involve special preparation for applying the policy during the trip. The Parish Safe Church Team will work on a plan with the trip leaders (see Appendix 11: General Recommendations for Safety on Student Trips).

### ***More Specific Expectations for Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships***

When creating safe boundaries for persons who have pastoral relationships, it is important to establish what types of interactions are appropriate and inappropriate. Stating which behaviors are appropriate and inappropriate allows church personnel to comfortably show positive affection in ministry and yet identify individuals who are not maintaining safe boundaries with other adults. These guidelines are:

- Based, in large part, on avoiding behaviors known to be used by those who have engaged in sexual exploitation of adults.
- Intended to assist church personnel and congregations, schools and church-related organizations in monitoring and supervising behaviors and interactions of persons who have pastoral relationships to help maintain appropriate boundaries at all times.
- Intended to be used to make decisions about interactions of persons who have pastoral relationships with those with whom they have a pastoral relationship.
- To be carefully followed by all who are involved in pastoral relationships.

Some **appropriate** interactions, as long as they are welcomed by the recipient, are listed below:

- Brief hugs.
- Pats on the shoulder or back.
- Culturally appropriate kisses on the cheek.
- Handshakes.
- Holding hands during prayer.

Some **inappropriate** interactions in pastoral relationships and other ministries with adults include:

- Any form of unwanted affection.
- Inappropriate or lengthy embraces.
- Inappropriate kisses on the mouth.
- Touching sexual areas of the body.
- Showing affection while in isolated areas such as bedrooms, closets, staff-only areas or other private rooms.
- Comments or compliments (spoken, written or electronic) related to a person's body or appearance that are at all suggestive.
- Giving gifts or money to favored individuals.
- Repeated and/or private meetings with individual adults, especially meetings that occur away from church property and during non-business hours.
- Electronic communications that contain personal disclosures or solicitations of an intimate relationship.
- Seeking excessive private time with a specific adult.
- Changing one's manner of dress when in the company of a specific adult.
- Providing a specific adult with personal access, such as one's personal email address or cell phone number if that is not the norm.

***Persons who have pastoral relationships are prohibited from:***

- Dating or becoming romantically involved with those with whom they have a pastoral relationship as long as the pastoral relationship continues. This prohibition shall remain in effect until consultation with the rector/vicar (or in the case of a deacon and priest with the bishop or canon to the ordinary).
- Having sexual contact with any person with whom he/she has a pastoral relationship.
- Possessing any sexually oriented materials (images, magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on church property or using such materials in the conduct of their ministry unless the materials are part of a preapproved educational program or curriculum and are used only for that purpose.
- Using the internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or from having it on church-owned computers and bringing such materials onto church property.
- Discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the internet, with any person with whom they have a pastoral relationship.

It is always the responsibility of the person in the position of greater power to maintain appropriate boundaries with others. The following behaviors are unacceptable by any bishops, priests, deacons or parish/diocesan staff:

- Any abuse of power as defined by this policy.
- Sexual harassment of any kind, including unwanted sexual attention, comments or unwanted physical touch.
- Behavior or words that discriminate against anyone based on age, race, sex, ethnicity, national origin, religion, language, disability, health conditions, socioeconomic status, marital status, domestic status or parental status.
- Any words that belittle or threaten.

Abusers often use charm or other tactics to manipulate others. Targets of abuse often report feeling flattered and then later confused, upset, guilty, ashamed and as though the abuse is all their fault. Victims should know that although it is normal to feel this way, abuse is never their fault. Those in positions of power and trust are responsible and able to respect appropriate boundaries.

Abusers are often skilled at explaining away concerning behavior. Anyone who experiences or has information regarding concerning behavior or a policy violation should document it and speak up as soon as possible to the Safe Church Team. We should all be mindful of what is happening around us and speak up to the Safe Church Team if anyone is demonstrating concerning behavior, crossing boundaries or violating this policy in any way.

## VI. Responding to Policy Violations and Concerns

The Diocese of Central Florida takes seriously all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety. Any person – staff, volunteer, parent or church member – who witnesses a violation of this policy is expected to intervene if they feel safe to do so or to get someone who can. The witness should then speak up to the Parish Safe Church Team as soon as possible, within 24 hours at most. Furthermore, any concerns related to vulnerable persons should be brought to the attention of the Parish Safe Church Team. The Parish Safe Church Team will document all concerns or policy violations and collaborate on any appropriate response and accountability. Any concerns about the Parish Safe Church Team should go to the rector or vestry. The Parish Safe Church Team may make use of a limited access agreement to clarify specific boundaries and expectations with an individual whose behavior is causing concern (see Example, Limited Access Agreement, in Appendix 14).

The Parish Safe Church Team will contact the Diocesan Safe Church Team if the policy violation or concern involves clergy.

## VII. Reporting Policy

The Diocese of Central Florida is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any allegations or findings of abuse or harassment within the diocese. We will work to create an environment where anyone feels comfortable raising questions and concerns, coming forward with reports of any misconduct, and being proactive about preventing and responding to abuse. In responding to abuse, the Diocese of Central Florida will always prioritize the safety and needs of the victim(s) and other vulnerable persons. In most circumstances, it is difficult for victims to come forward. The Diocese of Central Florida will do its best never to blame victims for struggling to come forward, delaying disclosure or displaying other common disclosure behavior. All adults in Florida have a legal obligation to report abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult. By virtue of our baptism, all Christians have an ethical obligation to speak up on behalf of the vulnerable.

### **Immediate Reporting Policy**

1. When there is a reasonable belief that any person is in immediate danger (e.g., an act of violence is actively happening or has just occurred), call 911. After the call, contact a member of the Parish Safe Church Team.
2. If there is a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a minor (age 17 or younger) or vulnerable adult (e.g., elder abuse or abuse against an adult with intellectual disabilities), all adults within the Diocese of Central Florida must immediately report to the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-962-2873. Then report to the appropriate local law enforcement department.

Online exploitation of children may also be reported to the CyberTipline at 1-800-843-5678 or online at [CyberTipline.org](https://www.cybertipline.org).

DO NOT try to investigate the matter. Any delay in reporting could result in a loss of critical evidence, potentially be a violation of the law and worst of all, enable the continued abuse of vulnerable children or adults. After the report, contact a member of the Parish Safe Church Team. If the potential abuse involves a member of the clergy, after reporting as detailed above, a person may contact the Diocesan Safe Church Team by contacting the diocesan office or reaching out directly to the canon to the ordinary.

If the victim is now an adult but the abuse was against them as a minor, we will support them and respect their agency in reporting. The only exceptions are if the abuse occurred within our parish community or if the name of the perpetrator is made known.

3. If there is a disclosure, any evidence or knowledge, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a non-vulnerable adult, all persons should contact the Parish Safe Church Team. The report may also go to the Diocesan Safe Church Team if it pertains to potential abuse by clergy.
4. After receiving any information from any above steps, a Parish or Diocesan Safe Church Team member shall inform the entire team (except a person who is involved in any allegation or the family member of such a person) and document the information. If there are concerns or allegations involving a member or members of the Safe Church Team, the report may go to the rector, the vestry or the Diocesan Safe Church Team (or the canon to the ordinary or bishop in the case of a concern regarding a member of the Diocesan Safe Church Team).
5. The Parish Safe Church Team shall ensure reports have been made to proper authorities (law enforcement and social services when applicable) in situations of potential abuse as explained above, including child abuse and neglect, elder abuse or abuse against an adult with intellectual disabilities. In other cases involving an adult victim, the Parish Safe Church Team will respect the agency of any adult victim(s) regarding whether the adult victim(s) reports personally to the appropriate authorities. The decision of a survivor to personally report adult abuse and/or cooperate with authorities is ultimately their choice. However, the Parish Safe Church Team should work to encourage and support the victim(s) in every possible way. There may be situations where the Parish Safe Church Team will report information pertaining to a potential crime against an adult or child even when the victim is not ready to do so. When reporting is required or is – in the judgment of the Parish Safe Church Team – in the best interest of the safety of others, such as when there is any potential reason to believe the victim or others may still be in danger (e.g., in cases involving domestic violence, stalking, assault or

threats), the Parish Safe Church Team may coordinate with national or local experts and the victim to make a safety plan. The Safe Church Team will also seek to communicate to the victim, as sensitively as possible, the reason for said reporting.

6. If the Parish Safe Church Team receives any information pertaining to potential abuse by clergy within the Diocese of Central Florida, that information shall be communicated promptly to the canon to the ordinary or other members of the Diocesan Safe Church Team through the diocesan office.

## VIII. Response Protocols

After receiving any information from any above steps, the Diocesan Safe Church Team (in situations involving clergy) or Parish Safe Church Team (in situations involving non-clergy) will coordinate with the rector and vestry on critical response issues, including:

1. Assessing safety.
2. Assessing accountability or boundaries for alleged perpetrators.
3. Implementing care for any victims and families.
4. Connecting to specialized resources.

When the alleged perpetrator is within the parish and non-clergy, the Parish Safe Church Team shall make any recommendations regarding administrative leave, suspension, other restriction or discipline to the rector. This will be reevaluated as necessary as the situation develops. It is strongly recommended that any person be restricted by the rector from any contact with any vulnerable persons when there are credible or substantive allegations of abuse as defined above. This would be a temporary step until the completion of any investigations and/or the rector and vestry have sufficient information to make personnel decisions and/or decisions about other accountability. The rector, vestry and Parish Safe Church Team are encouraged to seek support and guidance as needed from the Diocesan Safe Church Team.

When the alleged perpetrator is a member of the clergy, the Diocesan Safe Church Team shall coordinate with parish leaders on practical matters above. The Diocesan Safe Church Team shall make a recommendation to the bishop regarding any leave, suspension or other discipline as appropriate under Canon IV of The Episcopal Church.

Any person facing an allegation of abuse, and any family member or close mentor of such a person, must recuse themselves from these response protocols, whether a member of the Parish or Diocesan Safe Church Team, vestry, or rector or other clergy.

Whenever possible, the Parish or Diocesan Safe Church Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE); The Florida Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-500-1119); The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN: 1-800-656-4673) or Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's National Helpline (SAMHSA: 1-800-662-HELP).

Each parish shall make available a condensed policy available within the parish with specific information related to the nearest resources available:

[Nearest Child Advocacy Center - Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_.]

[Nearest Domestic Violence Shelter - Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_.]

[Available Sexual Assault Center - Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_.]

[Other Local Resources: \_\_\_\_\_.]

Any victim has a right for their privacy to be respected as much as possible. At times, it may be necessary for the Diocese of Central Florida to share certain information for the purpose of safeguarding other vulnerable persons and allowing for any other potential victims to come forward.

The appropriate Parish and/or Diocesan Safe Church Team shall coordinate further appropriate response, including but not limited to:

- Ensuring all potential crimes against children and vulnerable adults have been reported to appropriate authorities (relevant child protective services, adult protective services, law enforcement, etc.) according to the policy above.
- Taking any further action for the protection of vulnerable persons (making a safety plan, connecting a person to local resources, asking if they need other immediate assistance, etc.).
- Facilitating cooperation with any investigations, including helping investigators assess the possibility of other victims and communicating in appropriate ways within the parish or with others.
- Ongoing, appropriate care for the victim(s), including helping them connect with professional trauma informed care if desired. Also providing appropriate care for others impacted by the situation (family members or others) as appropriate.
- When appropriate, with careful attention to protecting the privacy of any reporting victims, offering public support and/or opposing harmful narratives toward reporting victims (please seek guidance from the canon of the ordinary regarding communication.)
- Maintaining contact with the alleged offender during any investigations, administrative leave or times of restricted access to ensure proper boundaries and accountability, especially with regard to controlling the narrative, retaliation and access to other vulnerable people.
- Caring for others in the parish and coordinating with outside resources as needed.

- Documenting relevant actions and information (see Appendix 15 for a sample form that can be used for initial and ongoing documentation).
- Reaching out to qualified experts with questions or when an independent consultation or investigation is appropriate.

### **Independent Consultation and Investigation**

When an independent investigation does not come through law enforcement or relevant Child or Adult Protective Services, there are several scenarios when it is strongly advisable that a parish or the diocese pursue independent consultation or investigation in response to allegations of abuse or harassment, such as:

- Authorities decline to investigate or file charges, and yet the need for factual clarity remains, even though the allegations may not rise to the level of criminal conduct. There is conduct that falls below criminal conduct but may violate this policy and disqualify someone from a position.
- A non-vulnerable adult victim is not ready to report allegations of a criminal nature to law enforcement.
- The alleged offender is a member of the clergy, vestry or a Safe Church Team.
- The alleged victim(s) requests an investigation, or there is a strong belief that there may be other victims.
- The parish or diocese wants to investigate and assess how it responded to the allegations of abuse to better understand how it could have responded more effectively and to improve for the future.

The appropriate Parish or Diocesan Safe Church Team will make a recommendation to the rector (in cases involving non-clergy) or canon to the ordinary (in cases involving clergy) regarding the wisdom of independent consultation or investigation. The appropriate Parish and/or Diocesan Safe Church Team shall document all related information along with an account of its decision.

When a parish or the diocese decides to engage an independent investigation, it must be conducted by an independent organization or person(s) experienced in investigating cases of the specific form(s) of abuse or misconduct in view. The organization should ideally utilize a multidisciplinary team of trained investigators (examples can include current or past law enforcement officers, prosecutors and/or mental health experts) who are trained in best practice investigative standards, have significant experience investigating a wide range of misconduct and/or abuse cases, and utilize trauma-informed practices in their investigations.

Upon completion of an investigation, the independent investigating body will deliver to the appropriate rector or bishop a report that will consist of its investigative findings, analysis and

recommendations. Any personnel decisions will be made in view of the recommendations of the report by the appropriate rector or bishop according to the values and employment practices of our organization in accord with Canon IV and in communication with the appropriate Parish and/or Diocesan Safe Church Team.

## IX. Retaliation

The Diocese of Central Florida prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual or group who is involved in any activity in this policy, such as reporting concerns or potential evidence or cooperating in a criminal or independent investigation. Retaliation can take many forms, including, but not limited to, shunning, violence, threats or intimidation that would discourage some people from engaging in activity required or encouraged by this policy. Actions in response to a good-faith report or response under this policy are considered retaliatory if they could reasonably have an adverse effect on the well-being of an individual or if they impact their ability to fully participate in church activities, including compliance with this policy. Reports, concerns or questions about retaliation should be immediately reported to a Parish Safe Church Team, rector or vestry. All individuals and groups of individuals engaging in retaliation will be held accountable under this policy. Any retaliation by a Parish Safe Church Team, clergy or parish leaders (e.g., vestry) may be reported directly to the canon to the ordinary or anyone at the diocesan office.

## X. Trauma-Informed Care

Survivors should have agency over sharing their story. When survivors choose to do so, they need our utmost support. A Parish Safe Church Team, in coordination with the rector, may plan to care for any survivors of abuse in ways that prioritize safety, trustworthiness and respect for the agency of the victim as much as possible.

This support will include as desired by the victim and/or non-offending family members:

- Listening and staying calm.
- Affirming without judgment.
- Validating strong emotions (such as anger, betrayal and confusion).
- Respecting their privacy.
- Encouraging and empowering their agency.
- Encouraging them to seek professional medical or mental health care as appropriate.
- Asking if there is anything practical the church can do.

Our support will recognize our limitations and will not offer therapeutic, legal or other professional advice but will focus on personal support and empowerment.

We will be careful to avoid causing further harm, and under no circumstances – even when the abuse is alleged and not proven – will we:

- Place any portion of blame for the abuse on the victim.
- Probe for intimate details of the abuse.
- Express disbelief.
- Attempt to silence the victim.
- Encourage noncompliance with the law.
- Express support for the perpetrator.
- Urge meeting with, reconciliation with or forgiveness of the perpetrator.

Receiving an abuse disclosure is an honor, not a burden; it is a sign of trust. Survivors often choose to disclose their abuse years, even decades, after it occurred. The Diocese of Central Florida encourages anyone receiving an abuse disclosure or in subsequent conversation with a survivor to be guided by the following responses:<sup>3</sup>

<b>DO Say</b>	<b>DON'T Say</b>
Thank you for telling me.	Why are you telling me this?
I believe you.	Why didn't you _____ (run/scream/stop him, etc.)
I'm so sorry this happened to you. How can I help?	What do you mean when you say he abused you? What exactly did he do?
Take as much time as you need.	You need to forgive and move on.
I am here.	It'll take some time, but you'll get over it.
The following should only be said if the victim indicates these concerns are on his/her mind.	It was so long ago, why are you still letting your abuser win by hanging on to it? Let it go.
It is OK to be angry.	Try to be strong.
It's understandable you're feeling that way.	Out of tragedies good things happen.

---

<sup>3</sup> Recommended resources on trauma-informed care available from the diocese: *Caring for Survivors* by Justin S. Holcomb and Basyle Tchividjian; "[Toward a More Trauma-Informed Church](#)" by Pete Singer; "[Coordinating Pastoral Care of Survivors with Mental Health Providers](#)" by Pete Singer.

Your reaction is not an uncommon response.	You're lucky that _____ didn't happen.
You're not going crazy. These are normal responses following abuse.	I know how you feel.
It wasn't your fault.	Perhaps you misunderstood.

## XI. Known Offender Policy

The Diocese of Central Florida is committed to holding admitted or convicted offenders we believe are repentant to a high standard of accountability. Known offenders who demonstrate evidence that they are not repentant are extremely dangerous and are not welcome in our churches. Jesus welcomed sinners, but he did not command us to welcome wolves among the sheep. Known offenders who wish to have any connection to a parish must be willing to undergo a process designed to assess their individual situation, ongoing repentance, and what safeguards are appropriate. Offenders must agree to accept whatever accountability and safeguards our leadership, in consultation with experts, deem appropriate. Offenders must be willing to agree to this before the process of assessment begins. No assessment will begin if the victim(s) of the perpetrator are still in that parish as any victim should be free to worship without their perpetrator present. Situations where the victim wishes for their perpetrator to worship in the same parish will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

If a convicted offender asks to join a parish, the rector or senior warden may contact the diocesan office. The diocesan office will support the parish as it navigates the process below. In certain cases, the diocesan office may facilitate consultation with an independent organization with more expertise to assist with the assessment of the situation. Similarly, if an individual was in the past credibly accused of abuse, the diocesan office may coordinate with an independent organization on a plan as to how to proceed.

Parish leaders will use the following process:

1. Interview with the known offender.
2. Interview with other relevant parties (e.g., family, treatment provider, counselor, parole officer, etc.).
3. Acquiring records relating to the offender.
4. Assessing repentance (e.g., assessing cognitive distortions, comparing the offender's words with other information, etc.).

5. [If applicable]: Setting level of participation and safe church requirements in an accountability plan, including accountability on and off church property (see Appendix 13 for an example Known Offender Accountability Plan).

Any offender who evidences common distortions such as deception, minimization, excuses, victim blaming or other indicators that they are not repentant shall not be allowed any connection to a parish. Offenders who are actively using distortions are signaling that they are not safe to others. Clergy may continue to meet with them at their discretion.

Parish or diocesan leaders may consult with experts as needed throughout this process to ask appropriate questions and assess them. No one who is convicted of or who is believed to have abused as defined by this policy is eligible to serve in any role as an employee of the diocese or serve as a volunteer with children or vulnerable persons within the diocese. Such persons may not have any access to children in the diocese (on or off church property) or hold any employed position with any level of power and trust, even if it is not directly connected to ministry to children.

Any adult who is a convicted or known sex offender who attends group activities shall agree to have their name known within the parish and shall abide by all accountability and safeguards. Any adult offender who is known or believed to be attracted to children or fantasizes about children will not attend in any settings with children present for their own best interests.

Any known offender who has any contact beyond clergy within a parish shall have an accountability plan that addresses key requirements on and off church property. The plan will involve communication with appropriate persons such as family, friends, employers, counselors and parole/probation officers. The safeguards shall be reviewed as needed and at a minimum every year by leadership and the parish Safe Church Team in consultation with child protection experts as needed. When a known offender is judged to be repentant and has some connection to the parish ministry, those who have responsibility to minister to them will have specific training.

## XII. Appendices

### APPENDIX 1 - DIOCESAN TRAINING PLAN (UPDATED EVERY THREE YEARS)

#### Regular Training Requirements

##### *Clergy:*

- Safe Church God's Children Training.
- Prevention of Exploitation Training.
- Prevention of Harassment Training.

##### *Supervisors and Decision-Makers:*

- Safe Church God's Children Training.
- Prevention of Exploitation Training (recommended, but must indicate intention to comply with all policies).
- Prevention of Harassment Training (recommended, but must indicate intention to comply with all policies).

##### *Church Employees:*

- Safe Church God's Children Training.
- Prevention of Exploitation Training (if their role includes pastoral relations).
- Prevention of Harassment Training.

##### *Volunteers with Children/Vulnerable Adults:*

- Safe Church God's Children Training.
- Prevention of Exploitation Training (recommended, but only required if their role includes pastoral relations).
- Prevention of Harassment Training (recommended, but only required if they are an employee of the institution).

##### *Volunteers with Pastoral Relations:*

- Safe Church God's Children Training.
- Prevention of Exploitation Training.
- Prevention of Harassment Training (recommended, but must indicate intention to comply with all policies).

##### *Volunteers who do not supervise children:*

- Safe Church God's Children Training (at least one hour of training required).
- Prevention of Exploitation Training (recommended, but must indicate intention to comply with all policies).
- Prevention of Harassment Training (recommended, but must indicate intention to comply with all policies).

## **Policy Awareness Plan**

This policy shall be disseminated widely within the diocese through publications, public discussion, educational opportunities, sermons, policies briefings with staff and volunteers, training programs and other appropriate means of communication that will raise awareness and promote the mentality that all of us are responsible for creating a safe environment for children, vulnerable adults and all within the parish. Specifically, the most current version of our policy shall be:

- Posted on the diocesan website.
- Condensed, printed and made available in each parish (see Appendix 3: Model Condensed Parish Policy).
- Featured in the church's newsletter, highlighting a tenet of the policy every quarter.
- Distributed in new-member packets.
- Revisited often by our leaders as a key aspect of discipleship in sermons and other communications.

All church staff, volunteers and members must sign an annual online affirmation that they have read and agree to abide by the terms of this policy, including a commitment to comply and hold others accountable. Furthermore, all staff, volunteers and members will attend an annual training on abuse and at least one annual internal briefing on this policy.

All parishes shall conduct regular safety talks with elementary-age children, middle school students and high school students. The recommendation is to conduct brief talks at least on a quarterly basis. See Appendix 12, Recommendations for Safety Talks, for guidance.

## APPENDIX 2: POTENTIAL INDICATORS OF CHILD ABUSE

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse if a child has:

- Torn, stained or bloody underclothing.
- Difficulty, pain or blood in the genital area when walking, sitting or using the bathroom.
- Discharge from the penis or vagina.
- Injuries (e.g., bruises, tearing, bleeding), itching or swelling in the genital, vaginal or anal area.
- Urinary tract infections, yeast infections, sexually transmitted diseases.
- Pregnancy.

Pay attention to behavioral signs and shifts. Behavioral signs are not always definitive, as some behavioral changes can be rooted in concerns other than abuse, but always notice and pay attention to the following:

- Sharp changes in behavior, personality, clothing, social status, financial status (e.g., suddenly has money).
- Sudden drop in grades.
- Fear toward a person, type of person or situation.
- Nightmares or trouble sleeping.
- Anxiety, hyperactivity, hypervigilance.
- Depression.
- Eating disorders or self-harm.
- Acting out sexually.
- Unexplained stomach pain.

It is atypical for children to engage in the following sexual behaviors:

- Placing mouth on sex part.
- Asking others to engage in sexual acts.
- Trying to have intercourse or imitating intercourse.
- Undressing others, especially if done forcefully.
- Imitating sexual positions with dolls.
- Inserting an object into vagina or anus, especially if child continues to do so despite pain.
- Manually stimulating or having oral or genital contact with pets.
- Making sexual sounds.
- Inserting tongue in mouth when kissing.

Consider the possibility of physical abuse if a child has one or more of the following:

- Frequent injuries of any kind (e.g., bruises, cuts, fractures, burns), especially if the child is unable to provide an adequate explanation of the cause.

- Injuries that appear in distinctive patterns such as grab marks, human bite marks, cigarette burns or impressions of other instruments.
- Injuries that present on both sides of the head or body, as accidental injuries typically only affect one side of the body.

Consider the possibility of neglect if a child:

- Is obviously malnourished, listless or fatigued.
- Begs, steals, or hoards food or complains frequently of hunger.
- Is consistently dirty or has severe body odor.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.
- Untreated illness, injuries, health (e.g., unfilled cavities) or serious educational needs.
- Broken or missing eyeglasses, hearing aid or other necessary aids or equipment.
- Has an untreated need for glasses, dental care or other medical attention.
- Is inappropriately left unsupervised.
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs.

## APPENDIX 3: MODEL CONDENSED PARISH POLICY

### **Condensed Policies for Abuse Prevention and Response The Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida**

See our full policy here: <https://cfdiocese.info/abuse-prevention>

#### **I. Foundation: Our Christian Faith**

The Episcopal Diocese of Central Florida is committed to protecting the vulnerable, caring for survivors and holding abusers accountable. By virtue of baptism, all members of the Church are called to holiness of life and accountability to one another. Our commitments come from God, who is a refuge for the abused and never ignores their cry (Ps. 9:9, 12). Our community seeks to embody Jesus' priority of justice for the vulnerable, especially children.

Abuse is a particularly grievous sin (and often a crime) that occurs when someone in a position of power and trust violates or exploits someone who is often powerless to stop it. Abuse is, sadly, a common reality in this world. As Christians we cannot face abuse if we are in denial about its reality. Instead, Jesus calls us to be "wise as serpents" (Matt. 10:16). We all must become educated about abuse and take responsibility to uphold our policy.

Our goal is to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse by becoming a community that is educated on various forms of abuse and common dynamics, clarifying appropriate boundaries and doing the hard work of holding each other accountable. All persons should experience an environment of safety and justice, one that is free from any form of abuse.

By its very nature, our community includes interaction with vulnerable children and adults. Sadly, many within the church have acted in predatory ways toward vulnerable people, and bad actors will often seek environments with vulnerable people. Abuse in all its forms is almost always perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Abusers utilize a variety of tactics to gain trust, deceive both victims and others within a community, and keep the abuse secret. This policy only states what we all must take ownership of in our community as we together walk with God, who loves justice and defends the vulnerable.

#### **II. Definitions of Abuse and Harassment**

Abuse: In general, abuse occurs when a person in a position of power and/or trust (e.g., bishop, priest, deacon, vestry member, boss, mentor, supervisor, parent, adult, older child, etc.) uses that position to exploit or violate someone who is more vulnerable (e.g., a child; someone who is sick, elderly or disabled; a student; employee; intern; immigrant, etc.). That exploitation or violation can take a variety of forms such as emotional, financial, physical, sexual, spiritual, etc.

1. **Economic exploitation** is the deliberate misplacement, exploitation or wrongful temporary or permanent use of a minor or vulnerable adult's belongings or money. Economic exploitation is a common form of elder abuse.
2. **Emotional abuse** is a pattern of controlling and domineering behaviors and causes mental or emotional injury. In children, it may result in an observable and material impairment in the child or youth's growth, development or psychological functioning.
3. **Neglect** is the failure to provide for a minor or vulnerable adult's basic needs (when caregivers have those means) or the failure to protect them from harm.
4. **Physical abuse** is non-accidental injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a person or persistent physical threats.
5. **Sexual abuse** is any sexual contact, penetration or non-contact sexual behavior that occurs within a significant power differential (adult-child, boss-employee, clergy-congregant, counselor-patient).
6. **Spiritual abuse** is a pattern of using God, the Bible, theology or spirituality in a pattern of controlling, domineering or exploitative behaviors.

*For more detailed definitions, see our full policy.*

### **III. Administrative Policy**

Each rector shall establish a Parish Safe Church Team. The Parish Safe Church Team is responsible for equipping the parish to live out the policy of the diocese. The Parish Safe Church Team is typically three to six members and is recommended to be at least 50% women. The team may be comprised of a mix of clergy and laity at the discretion of the rector in consultation with the vestry. Each rector and vestry shall make the team known within the parish.

The Diocesan Safe Church Team is led by the canon to the ordinary. The Diocesan Safe Church Team is responsible for supporting each parish in living out the policies of the Diocese of Central Florida. The Diocesan Safe Church Team shall receive all reports of potential clergy misconduct (see more below).

*For further information about the training and screening of clergy, employees and volunteers, see the full policy.*

### **IV. Community Conduct Expectations**

The Diocese of Central Florida is committed to creating and promoting a positive, nurturing environment for all. All in a parish have a responsibility to uphold safety and healthy boundaries in the community. Jesus commanded us to treat others as we would want to be treated. The following are the safe and healthy boundaries that all within our diocese are responsible to uphold.

## **Community Expectations for All**

- Appropriate touch, whether of an adult or child, is always welcomed by the person (if you are not sure, just ask – e.g., “May I give you a hug?”). See below for specific examples of appropriate touch when welcomed and inappropriate touch with children and students.
- Touch within a significant power difference should be observable to others (e.g., between an adult and a child, clergy and a vulnerable adult).
- Children who need a diaper change or assistance in the restroom outside of the children’s ministry procedure (see below) must be helped by their own parent or guardian.
- Stay in visible and accountable spaces: No one should be alone with a child who is not their own (including giving rides or messaging via text or social media).
- Use words that convey respect: Avoid any words that belittle or threaten, and in a power differential, avoid any sexualized comments, including jokes, stories, experiences or sharing sexualized content (such as images, video or other media) or engaging in any other sexualized communication.

*For more specific information about expectations for interactions with minors, expectations within structured ministry with minors and expectations for those who have pastoral relations, see our full policy.*

## **V. Responding to Policy Violations and Concerns**

The Diocese of Central Florida takes seriously all policy violations and all concerns related to respect and safety. Any person – staff, volunteer, parent or church member – who witnesses a violation of this policy is expected to intervene if they feel safe to do so or to get someone who can. The witness should then speak up to the Parish Safe Church Team as soon as possible. Furthermore, any concerns related to vulnerable persons should be brought to the attention of the Parish Safe Church Team. The Parish Safe Church Team will document all concerns or policy violations and collaborate on any appropriate response and accountability. Any concerns about the Parish Safe Church Team may go to the rector or vestry. The Parish Safe Church Team may make use of a limited access agreement to clarify specific boundaries and expectations with an individual whose behavior is causing concern.

The Parish Safe Church Team will contact the Diocesan Safe Church Team if the policy violation or concern involves clergy.

## **VI. Reporting Policy**

The Diocese of Central Florida is committed to providing a timely and effective response to any allegations or findings of abuse or harassment within the diocese. We will work to create an environment where anyone feels comfortable raising questions and concerns, coming forward with reports of any misconduct, and being proactive about preventing and responding to abuse. In responding to abuse, the Diocese of Central Florida will always prioritize the safety and needs of the victim(s) and other vulnerable persons. In most circumstances, it is difficult for victims to come forward. The Diocese of Central Florida will do its best never to blame victims for struggling to come

forward, delaying disclosure or displaying other common disclosure behavior. All adults in Florida have a legal obligation to report abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult. By virtue of our baptism, all Christians have an ethical obligation to speak up on behalf of the vulnerable.

### **Immediate Reporting Policy**

1. When there is a reasonable belief that any person is in immediate danger (e.g., an act of violence is actively happening or has just occurred), call 911. After the call, contact a member of the Parish Safe Church Team.
2. If there is a disclosure of abuse, any evidence or knowledge of abuse, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a minor (age 17 or younger) or vulnerable adult (e.g., elder abuse or abuse against an adult with intellectual disabilities), all adults within the Diocese of Central Florida must immediately report to the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-962-2873. Then report to the appropriate local law enforcement department.

Online exploitation of children may also be reported to the CyberTipline at 1-800-843-5678 or online at [CyberTipline.org](http://CyberTipline.org).

DO NOT try to investigate the matter. Any delay in reporting could result in a loss of critical evidence, potentially be a violation of the law and worst of all, enable the continued abuse of vulnerable children or adults. After the report, contact a member of the Parish Safe Church Team. If the potential abuse involves a member of the clergy, after reporting as detailed above, a person may contact the Diocesan Safe Church Team by contacting the diocesan office or reaching out directly to the canon to the ordinary.

If the victim is now an adult, but the abuse was against them as a minor, we will support them and respect their agency in reporting. The only exceptions are if the abuse occurred within our parish community or if the name of the perpetrator is made known.

3. If there is a disclosure, any evidence or knowledge, or any reasonable belief of abuse against a non-vulnerable adult, all persons should contact the Parish Safe Church Team. The report may also go to the Diocesan Safe Church Team if it pertains to potential abuse by clergy.
4. After receiving any information from any above steps, a Parish or Diocesan Safe Church Team member shall inform the entire team (except a person or family member of a person who is involved in any allegation) and document the information. If there are concerns or allegations involving a member or members of the Safe Church Team, the report may go to the rector, the vestry or the Diocesan Safe Church Team (or the canon to the ordinary or bishop in the case of a concern regarding a member of the Diocesan Safe Church Team).

5. The Parish Safe Church Team shall ensure reports have been made to proper authorities (law enforcement and social services when applicable) in situations of potential abuse, as explained above, including child abuse and neglect, elder abuse or abuse against an adult with intellectual disabilities. In other cases involving an adult victim, the Parish Safe Church Team will respect the agency of any adult victim(s) regarding whether the adult victim(s) reports personally to the appropriate authorities. The decision of a survivor to personally report adult abuse and/or cooperate with authorities is ultimately their choice. However, the Parish Safe Church Team should work to encourage and support the victim(s) in every possible way. There may be situations where the Parish Safe Church Team will report information pertaining to a potential crime against an adult or child even when the victim is not ready to do so. When reporting is required or is – in the judgment of the Parish Safe Church Team – in the best interest of the safety of others, such as when there is any potential reason to believe the victim or others may still be in danger (e.g. in cases involving domestic violence, stalking, assault or threats), the Parish Safe Church Team may coordinate with national or local experts and the victim to make a safety plan. The Safe Church Team will also seek to communicate to the victim, as sensitively as possible, the reason for said reporting.
6. If the Parish Safe Church Team receives any information pertaining to potential abuse by clergy within the Diocese of Central Florida, that information shall be communicated promptly to the canon to the ordinary or other members of the Diocesan Safe Church Team through the diocesan office.

## **VII. Response Protocols**

After receiving any information from any above steps, the Diocesan Safe Church Team (in situations involving clergy) or Parish Safe Church Team (in situations involving non-clergy) will coordinate with the rector and vestry on critical response issues, including:

1. Assessing safety.
2. Assessing accountability or boundaries for alleged perpetrators.
3. Implementing care for any victims and families.
4. Connecting to specialized resources.

When the alleged perpetrator is within the parish and non-clergy, the Parish Safe Church Team shall make any recommendations regarding administrative leave, suspension, other restriction or discipline to the rector. This will be reevaluated as necessary as the situation develops. It is strongly recommended that any person be restricted by the rector from any contact with any vulnerable persons when there are credible or substantive allegations of abuse as defined above. This would be a temporary step until the completion of any investigations and/or the rector and vestry have

sufficient information to make personnel decisions and/or decisions about other accountability. The rector, vestry and Parish Safe Church Team are encouraged to seek support and guidance as needed from the Diocesan Safe Church Team.

When the alleged perpetrator is a member of the clergy, the Diocesan Safe Church Team shall coordinate with parish leaders on practical matters above. The Diocesan Safe Church Team shall make a recommendation to the bishop regarding any leave, suspension or other discipline as appropriate under Canon IV.

Any person facing an allegation of abuse, and any family member or close mentor of such a person, must recuse themselves from these response protocols, whether a member of the Parish or Diocesan Safe Church Team, vestry, rector or other clergy.

Whenever possible, the Parish or Diocesan Safe Church Team should refer the victim(s) to local expert help (where available) and/or national organizations such as The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE); The Florida Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-500-1119); The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network Hotline (RAINN - 1-800-656-4673); or Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's National Helpline (SAMHSA: 1-800-662-HELP).

Each parish shall make available a condensed policy available within the parish with specific information related to the nearest resources available:

- [Nearest Child Advocacy Center - Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_.]
- [Nearest Domestic Violence Shelter - Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_.]
- [Available Sexual Assault Center - Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_.]
- [Other Local Resources: \_\_\_\_\_.]

Any victim has a right for their privacy to be respected as much as possible. At times, it may be necessary for the Diocese of Central Florida to share certain information for the purpose of safeguarding other vulnerable persons and allow for any other potential victims to come forward.

The appropriate Parish and/or Diocesan Safe Church Team shall coordinate further appropriate response, including, but not limited to:

- Ensuring all potential crimes against children and vulnerable adults have been reported to appropriate authorities according to the policy above.
- Taking any further action for the protection of vulnerable persons.

- Facilitating cooperation with any investigations, including helping investigators assess the possibility of other victims and communicating in appropriate ways within the parish or with others.
- Ongoing, appropriate care for the victim(s), including helping them connect with professional trauma-informed care if desired.
- When appropriate, with careful attention to protecting the privacy of any victims, offering public support and/or opposing harmful narratives toward victims.
- Maintaining contact with the alleged offender during any investigations, administrative leave or times of restricted access to ensure proper boundaries and accountability, especially with regard to controlling the narrative, retaliation and access to other vulnerable people.
- Caring for others in the parish and coordinating with outside resources as needed.
- Documenting relevant actions and information.
- Reaching out to qualified experts with questions or when an independent consultation or investigation is appropriate.

Those who use any position of power to abuse as defined by this policy shall never again serve in any formal role within the Diocese of Central Florida.

*For more information about how our diocese may use independent consultation or investigation in abuse response, see our full policy.*

### **VIII. Retaliation**

The Diocese of Central Florida prohibits any form of retaliation against any individual or group who is involved in any activity in this policy, such as reporting concerns or potential evidence or cooperating in a criminal or independent investigation. Retaliation can take many forms, including, but not limited to, shunning, violence, threats or intimidation that would discourage some persons from engaging in activity required or encouraged by this policy. Actions in response to a good-faith report or response under this policy are considered retaliatory if they could reasonably have an adverse effect on the well-being of an individual or if they impact their ability to fully participate in church activities, including compliance with this policy. Reports, concerns or questions about retaliation should be immediately reported to a Parish Safe Church Team, rector or vestry. All individuals and groups of individuals engaging in retaliation will be held accountable under this policy. Any retaliation by a Parish Safe Church Team, clergy or parish leaders (e.g., vestry) may be reported directly to the canon to the ordinary or anyone at the diocesan office.

### **IX. Trauma-Informed Care**

Survivors should have agency over sharing their story. When survivors choose to do so, they need our utmost support. A Parish Safe Church Team, in coordination with the rector, may plan to care

for any survivors of abuse in ways that prioritize safety, trustworthiness and respect for the agency of the victim as much as possible.

This support will include as desired by the victim and/or non-offending family members:

- Listening and staying calm.
- Affirming without judgment.
- Validating strong emotions (such as anger, betrayal and confusion).
- Respecting their privacy.
- Encouraging and empowering their agency.
- Encouraging them to seek professional medical or mental health care as appropriate.
- Asking if there is anything practical the church can do.

Our support will recognize our limitations and will not offer therapeutic, legal or other professional advice but will focus on personal support and empowerment.

We will be careful to avoid causing further harm, and under no circumstances – even when the abuse is alleged and not proven – will we:

- Place any portion of blame for the abuse on the victim.
- Probe for intimate details of the abuse.
- Express disbelief.
- Attempt to silence the victim.
- Encourage noncompliance with the law.
- Express support for the perpetrator.
- Urge meeting with, reconciliation with or forgiveness of the perpetrator.

Receiving an abuse disclosure is an honor, not a burden; it is a sign of trust. Survivors often choose to disclose their abuse years, even decades, after it occurred. The Diocese of Central Florida encourages anyone receiving an abuse disclosure or in subsequent conversation with a survivor to be guided by the following responses:<sup>4</sup>

<b>DO Say</b>	<b>DON'T Say</b>
Thank you for telling me.	Why are you telling me this?
I believe you.	Why didn't you _____ (run/scream/stop him, etc.)

---

<sup>4</sup> Recommended resources on trauma-informed care available from the diocese: *Caring for Survivors* by Justin Holcomb and Basyle Tchividjian; [“Toward a More Trauma-Informed Church”](#) by Pete Singer; [“Coordinating Pastoral Care of Survivors with Mental Health Providers”](#) by Pete Singer.

I'm so sorry this happened to you. How can I help?	What do you mean when you say he abused you? What exactly did he do?
Take as much time as you need.	You need to forgive and move on.
I am here.	It'll take some time, but you'll get over it.
The following should only be said if the victim indicates these concerns are on his/her mind.	It was so long ago; why are you still letting your abuser win by hanging on to it? Let it go.
It is OK to be angry.	Try to be strong.
It's understandable you're feeling that way.	Out of tragedies good things happen.
Your reaction is not an uncommon response.	You're lucky that _____ didn't happen.
You're not going crazy. These are normal responses following abuse.	I know how you feel.
It wasn't your fault.	Perhaps you misunderstood.

*For more information about our approach to known offenders, see our full policy. See our full policy for more information and resources regarding:*

- *Potential Indicators of Child Abuse.*
- *Important Forms.*
- *Guidance for Safety on Student Trips.*
- *Recommendations and Resources for Giving Child and Youth Safety Talks.*
- *Guidance for Supporting a Victim of Intimate Partner Violence (Domestic Violence).*
- *Guidance for Providing Counseling in a Pastoral Relationship.*

## APPENDIX 4: SAMPLE APPLICATION FORM

The parish will store all applications in a secure locked filing cabinet (or encrypted online storage). The information provided in this application will be kept confidential and shared only as necessary with members of the Search Committee and/or Parish Safe Church Team. Please attach additional sheets of paper as necessary to answer the questions below.

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_ Driver's License State and # \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Please list all addresses you have lived at for the past five years and your dates of residency.

---

---

---

---

---

Position applying for \_\_\_\_\_ How did you learn of this position? \_\_\_\_\_

**Educational History:** Please list all vocational or certificate programs, colleges, graduate schools and professional schools you have attended.

Name of school \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Degree/Program \_\_\_\_\_ Program completed? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Dates of attendance \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Degree/Program \_\_\_\_\_ Program completed? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Dates of attendance \_\_\_\_\_

Name of school \_\_\_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_

Degree/Program \_\_\_\_\_ Program completed? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

Dates of attendance \_\_\_\_\_

Were you ever suspended, expelled or formally disciplined at any post-high school academic institution for any reason? If so please list the date of the incident, type of discipline and reason for the discipline.

---

---

---

---

**Work Experience:** Please list all previous work history and any/ all experience working with children, whether paid or unpaid.

**Experience 1**

Employer/Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_ Reason for leaving \_\_\_\_\_  
Position \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's name \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's email \_\_\_\_\_  
Your role/responsibilities \_\_\_\_\_

**Experience 2**

Employer/Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_ Reason for leaving \_\_\_\_\_  
Position \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's name \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's email \_\_\_\_\_  
Your role/responsibilities \_\_\_\_\_

**Experience 3**

Employer/Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_ Reason for leaving \_\_\_\_\_  
Position \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's name \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's email \_\_\_\_\_  
Your role/responsibilities \_\_\_\_\_

**Experience 4**

Employer/Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_ Reason for leaving \_\_\_\_\_  
Position \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's name \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor's phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Supervisor's email \_\_\_\_\_  
Your role/responsibilities \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any and all criminal arrests or charges, including relevant dates, nature of the offense, conviction, sentence imposed and any rehabilitation.

---

---

---

---

Have you ever abused or neglected a child or an adult? If so, please explain.

---

---

---

---

Has anyone ever accused you of neglecting or abusing a child or adult? If so, please explain.

---

---

---

---

Have you ever been indicted by an institutional, independent, civil or criminal investigation of child abuse, neglect or endangerment in any form? If yes, please list any and all dates of investigation; the individual, organization or agency conducting the investigation(s) and the finding of the investigation. Please also attach any supporting documents you may have.

---

---

---

---

**References:** Please list two references below and their contact information. References should be individuals who have observed or supervised your work with children, who know you well and can attest to your character and work ethic.

**Reference 1**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

What is this person's relationship to you? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

**Reference 2**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

What is this person's relationship to you? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

**Reference 3**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

What is this person's relationship to you? \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

List any questions you may have or additional information you would like us to know.

---

---

---

Tell us a little about your faith journey.

---

---

---

Tell us about your views about the importance of protecting children in the church.

---

---

---

What are some strengths you have in working with children?

---

---

---

**Read and initial each item to signify your agreement to comply with the statement should you be offered a position to work or volunteer in our church.**

I have received a copy of the church's Child Protection Policy and agree to abide by its terms.

I agree to nurture and protect children and never to engage in behavior that may harm them.

I agree to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children involved in church services and activities.

In the event that I observe or hear of any inappropriate behaviors involving children or possible Child Protection Policy violations, I agree to immediately report my observations.

I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect children and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children to appropriate church leaders and city/state authorities in accordance with the policy.

I understand that the church will not tolerate abuse or other harm of children, and I agree to comply in spirit and action with this position.

I understand that it is my duty to provide complete and accurate information and to self-report all prior arrests, charges, investigations and convictions. I further understand that failure to do so is grounds for denying my application or for later dismissal.



## APPENDIX 5: SUGGESTED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following are sample questions that may help you screen out someone who is unable to maintain healthy boundaries with adults.

1. Please tell me about the last time a member of your (congregation, youth group, office staff, etc.) demanded too much of your time. How did you handle that?
2. Please give an example of a time in your work or volunteer history when you thought the policies were too rigid. How did you handle that?
3. Please describe a time when you felt a special bond or friendship between yourself and a member of your (congregation, youth group, office staff, etc.).
4. Please give an example of a “boundary violation.” Has that ever happened to you, or has anyone ever said that you violated a boundary of some sort?
5. Has disciplinary action of any sort ever been taken against you by a licensing board, professional association, ecclesiastical body, or educational or training institution? Have there been complaints against you that did not result in discipline? Are there complaints pending against you before any of the above-named bodies? If yes, please explain.
6. Have you ever been asked to resign or been terminated by a training program or employer? If yes, please explain.
7. Have you ever had a civil suit brought against you about your professional work, or is any such action pending? Have you ever had professional malpractice insurance suspended or revoked for any reason? If yes, please explain.
8. Have you ever been charged (formally or informally) with any ethics violations, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment? Are any such actions or complaints pending against you? If yes, please explain.
9. Are you now or have you ever had sexual contact or attempted sexual contact (sexual intercourse of any kind, intentional touching or conversation for the purpose of sexual arousal) with any person you were/are seeing in any professional context or in a pastoral relationship (e.g., parishioner, client, patient, employee, student)? If yes, please explain.
10. Are you now or have you ever been involved in the production, sale or distribution of pornographic materials? If yes, please explain.
11. Have you ever had a restraining order, injunction, order for protection or the like issued against you? Have you ever had your parental rights restricted, suspended or terminated, or have any of your children ever been placed in foster care? Have you ever been accused of domestic violence? If so, please explain.

## APPENDIX 6: SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR REFERENCES

1. Please give me an example of how \_\_\_\_\_ maintains good boundaries with adults.
2. Have you ever heard \_\_\_\_\_ tell a joke or say something that made you or others uncomfortable?
3. Would you be comfortable referring a vulnerable friend of yours to \_\_\_\_\_ for pastoral counseling? Why? Why not?
4. The position for which \_\_\_\_\_ has applied requires that they be able to work closely with people whose lives may be in turmoil and who may not have good judgment at that point in time. Can you think of any reason that \_\_\_\_\_ should not be allowed to do this work?

**APPENDIX 7: BACKGROUND INQUIRY RELEASE FORM**

For: \_\_\_\_\_ (Church or Organization)

In relation to my serving in the Diocese of Central Florida, I understand and authorize the access of information from various federal, state and other agencies maintaining information regarding any public record information.

I also understand this information may be accessed during my service and up to 30 days after separation from this diocese. I hereby consent to your obtaining various public record information from diocesan/church employers, from Professional Screening Services Inc. and/or any other party or agency, in accordance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act and any and all state and federal laws. I also understand that the requested information below is to be used for proper identification only and not for discriminatory purposes.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please print the following information:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Current Address \_\_\_\_\_  
(Street)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(City) (State) (Zip code)

List other counties/states where you have lived within past 10 years:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Gender \_\_\_\_\_ Driver's License Number \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Diocese where you are canonically resident \_\_\_\_\_

Diocese in which you currently serve (if different) \_\_\_\_\_

Return completed form: ATTN: Canon to the Ordinary, Diocese of Central Florida, 1017 East Robinson Street, Orlando, FL 32801 or to [admin@cfdiocese.org](mailto:admin@cfdiocese.org).

## **APPENDIX 8: SIGNED AGREEMENT FOR PERSONS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

**Read and initial each item to signify your agreement to comply with the statement.**

- I agree to do my best to prevent abuse and neglect among children and youth involved in church activities and services.
- I agree not to physically, sexually or emotionally abuse or neglect a child or youth.
- I agree to comply with and uphold the abuse prevention and response policies of the Diocese of Central Florida
- I agree to comply with the Guidelines for Appropriate Affection with children and youth.
- In the event that I observe any inappropriate behaviors or possible policy violations with children or youth, I agree to immediately report my observations to the Parish Safe Church Team or the rector.
- I acknowledge my obligation and responsibility to protect children and youth and agree to report known or suspected abuse of children or youth to the Florida Abuse Hotline and local law enforcement in accordance with the Diocese of Central Florida Policy.
- I agree to report any potential abuse to the Parish Safe Church Team after a report to state and local authorities in accordance with the Diocese of Central Florida Policy.
- I understand that the church will not tolerate abuse of children and youth, and I agree to comply in spirit and in action with this position.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT, RELEASE AND SIGNATURE**

To the best of my knowledge, the information contained in this application is complete and accurate. I understand that providing false information is grounds for not hiring me or choosing me for a volunteer position or for my discharge if I have already been hired or chosen.

I authorize any person or organization, whether or not identified in this application, to provide any information concerning my previous employment, education, credit history, driving record, criminal conviction record, sexual offender and predator registry or other qualifications for my employment or volunteering. I also authorize \_\_\_\_\_ Parish to request and receive such information.

If selected, I agree to be bound by the policies of the Diocese of Central Florida and any applicable parish policies.

I understand that these may be changed, withdrawn, added to or interpreted at any time at the \_\_\_\_\_ parish's sole discretion and without prior notice to me.

I also understand that my employment or volunteering may be terminated, or any offer or acceptance of employment or volunteering withdrawn, at any time, with or without cause and with or without prior notice at the option of \_\_\_\_\_ Parish or me.

Nothing contained in this application or in any pre-employment or pre-volunteering communication creates or is intended to create a contract between \_\_\_\_\_ Parish and me for either employment, volunteering or the providing of any benefit.

**I have read and understand the above provisions.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **APPENDIX 9: SIGNED AGREEMENT FOR PERSONS WHO HAVE PASTORAL RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Persons Who Have Pastoral Relationships**

- Acknowledge that they are responsible for following and upholding the abuse prevention and response policies of the Diocese of Central Florida.
- Understand that the church will not tolerate the sexual exploitation of adults it serves.
- Agree to not attempt to or to sexually exploit any person they serve or work with on behalf of the church or in any other setting.
- Agree, whenever appropriate and possible, to have one-to-one meetings with adults during regularly/publicly scheduled hours and by appointment on church property while others are present in the building or in other appropriate professional settings where they can be observed.
- Agree to maintain clear and appropriate boundaries and avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
- Agree to immediately end any sexual or inappropriate relationship with a person with whom they have a pastoral relationship or when they have questions about the implementation of these policies and immediately seek advice from the bishop, a trusted colleague or mental health professional.
- Agree to immediately report any inappropriate behaviors, boundary violations or possible policy violations they observe under these policies.
- Acknowledge their obligation and responsibility to prevent sexual exploitation of adults and agree to report known or suspected sexual exploitation of adults to church leaders and state authorities in accordance with these policies.

### **People Who Have Pastoral Relationships are Prohibited From:**

- Dating or becoming romantically involved with those with whom they have a pastoral relationship as long as the pastoral relationship continues. This prohibition shall remain in effect until consultation with the rector/vicar (or in case of a deacon and priest, with the bishop or canon to the ordinary).
- Having sexual contact with any person with whom he/she has a pastoral relationship.
- Possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, clothing, etc.) on church property or using such materials in the conduct of their ministry unless the materials are part of a pre-approved educational program or curriculum and are used only for that purpose.
- Using the internet to view or download any sexually oriented materials on church property or from having it on church-owned computers, and from bringing such materials onto church property.

- Discussing their own sexual activities, including dreams and fantasies, or discussing their use of sexually oriented or explicit materials such as pornography, videos or materials on or from the internet, with any person with whom they have a pastoral relationship.

*Signed and agreed upon* \_\_\_\_\_

*Printed Name* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

*Parish or Institution* \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 10: CHILD SAFETY INCIDENT REPORT/NOTICE OF CONCERN FORMS

### Sample: Child Safety Incident Report

*This form should be used to report to the Parish Safe Church Team any violation of the Abuse Policy, boundary violations, disclosures of abuse, child safety concerns or other behavior or allegations of behavior that might jeopardize the safety of a child. Proof or direct knowledge of a behavior or incident is not necessary to submit this form, and thus some lines on this form may not be applicable to you. Provide whatever information you do have, and where extra space is needed, please continue below the line or attach an additional sheet. If this is reportable to authorities according to our policy (e.g., an abuse disclosure), only fill this out after the report has been made.*

1. Date(s) of incident/behavior, if known \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name(s) and contact information of child(ren) harmed, potentially harmed or otherwise adversely impacted by incident/behavior \_\_\_Unknown \_\_\_Known (*fill out lines below*)

_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Child 1</i>	<i>Parent(s)</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Phone</i>

_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Child 1</i>	<i>Parent(s)</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Phone</i>

3. Name(s) and contact information of individual(s) – adult or child – who accidentally or intentionally violated the policy, otherwise harmed or potentially harmed (the above) child(ren) or who otherwise engaged in concerning behavior:

\_\_\_Unknown \_\_\_Known (*fill out lines below*)

_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Individual 1</i>	<i>Parent(s) (if individual is a minor)</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Phone</i>

_____	_____	_____	_____
<i>Individual 2</i>	<i>Parent(s) (if individual is a minor)</i>	<i>Email</i>	<i>Phone</i>

4. What policy, if any, was violated?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Where did the incident/behavior occur?

\_\_\_\_\_



Name(s) of other individual(s) present when agency was contacted

---

Name of Agency 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Date(s) of contact \_\_\_\_\_

Means of communicating with the agency \_\_\_\_\_ Report # \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of the individual(s) who contacted the agency

---

Name(s) of other individual(s) present when agency was contacted

---

12. Were any child protection professionals or experts, other than those listed above, contacted about this incident? If yes, please indicate the individual(s) or non-governmental agency contacted, the date of the contact and the result of consult.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Date</i>	<i>Consultant</i>	<i>Result</i>

_____	_____	_____
<i>Date</i>	<i>Consultant</i>	<i>Result</i>

13. What additional steps have been or will be taken to respond to this incident/violation? (e.g., other consultations sought, consequences for the actor(s), support for the impacted child(ren), community notification).

_____	_____
<i>(Anticipated) Date</i>	<i>Response</i>

_____	_____
<i>(Anticipated) Date</i>	<i>Response</i>

_____	_____
<i>(Anticipated) Date</i>	<i>Response</i>

_____	_____
<i>(Anticipated) Date</i>	<i>Response</i>

14. What, if anything, can be done to prevent future similar incidents/violations or improve response procedures?

---

---

15. Individual submitting this report:



5. Is there anything else you want the Safe Church Team to know (e.g., other information, steps you have taken or anything else)?

***Please submit this form to the Safe Church Team by emailing \_\_\_\_\_ or mailing it to the attention of the Safe Church Team at the church.***

**Confidential Notice of Concern Form**

Individual(s) of Concern: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of occurrence: \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Concern:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Inappropriate behavior with a child or youth

\_\_\_\_\_ Policy violation with a child or youth

\_\_\_\_\_ Inappropriate behavior with an adult

\_\_\_\_\_ Policy violation with an adult

\_\_\_\_\_ Possible risk of abuse

\_\_\_\_\_ Other concern:

Describe the situation: What happened, where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, who was present, who was notified? If reported to the state, what was their recommendation about investigating?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Has this situation ever occurred before? \_\_\_\_\_

What action was taken? How was the situation handled, who was involved, who was questioned, were police called?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is the follow-up plan? Does anyone else need to be notified? Will the situation need monitoring? Would you like someone to call you to discuss this situation?

---

---

---

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Location and address:

---

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted to: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 11: GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFETY ON STUDENT TRIPS

When taking students on a trip, the starting point is to uphold key boundaries from the parish policy that usually apply. This consistency will help you: Take the same approach as with other activities, applying key policy commitments in the trip context. Policy boundaries will still apply to issues of isolation, respect in touch, respect in words and not sharing sexualized content. The key is to think about how the boundaries apply in the specific context of the trip and bring clarity to these expectations.

At the same time, there will be some new boundaries to implement as well in the context of the trip. Trips are higher-risk situations because they involve sleeping arrangements, showering, changing clothes or other vulnerable situations. These exact boundaries will often be somewhat dependent on the set-up and facilities of the trip, details over which leaders may have more or less control. The best set-up is one in which showering and changing areas and restrooms allow for the privacy for each individual.

It is good to assess the set-up and facilities ahead of time and decide on what the boundaries will be for the group. Reach out to someone with more experience if you have specific questions about the best application of key principles for safe church. Once you land on the specifics, communicate these decisions with clarity to the group.

### **Key Boundaries to Consider:**

- Most church trips will separate sleeping arrangements by gender, barring extraordinary circumstances. Some set-ups (like a bunk room) will require adults and children to sleep in the same area. If this is the case, think about implementing boundaries including (but not limited to): no sharing beds or bunks, even in non-sleeping times (this is often wise to extend to students as well – GRACE knows of situations where a student crossed boundaries with another student in this type of context).
- Changing areas should be private; no adult should observe minors changing clothes.
- Set a curfew: No leaving sleeping quarters after a certain time. No adult may meet with students after this time, especially not alone and/or in an isolated setting.
- If it is not possible to have separate shower areas for adults and children, try to have separate times for adults and children to shower.
- If there is a set-up where students are sleeping and showering with little adult presence (such as in a hotel room), make sure they know that the boundaries apply to the way they treat their peers. Some teens who test boundaries will use the lack of adult supervision in these types of vulnerable settings to test boundaries. Try to reduce any power differential by grouping

students as much as possible with similar-aged students and give examples of expectations that include the way they treat their peers.

- No cell phones are to be out in any restroom, shower area or when people are changing clothes, period. No exceptions.

Setting a tone as leaders from the beginning of a trip makes a difference. Give a safety talk before the group departs. Frame these issues positively in terms of God's heart that each person is valuable and worthy of respect. God cares that our community is a place of safety and respect. This is in part what it means to love our neighbor.

**Use words that connect with your group and cover a few main points briefly:**

- This is a priority to God and to your leaders.
- All of us need to be accountable and treat others with respect, including leaders.
- Share the key boundaries: isolation, sleeping arrangements, showing/changing, restrooms, touch, words, etc.
- Give some examples specific to the set-up about how these boundaries will apply (e.g., having a one-on-one conversation out in an open, observable area is fine, but don't go off on your own to an isolated part of the camp without permission; hugs are acceptable as long as the other person welcomes them, but even if the touch is otherwise appropriate, it is never appropriate if the person does not want any touch at that time or if it is in an isolated area and not observable).
- Prepare them by stating options if they need help or a friend needs help: call parents, talk to any leader, talk to a friend who can help support them in going to a leader, etc.
- It is good to state that the entire group (leaders, adults, camp staff not from the church, students – ALL) must be accountable and treat others with respect. Leaders will ensure any boundary crossing or something more egregious is followed up on and there is accountability.
- Answer any questions group members have.

The key is to frame guidelines in terms of our Christian commitments and keep them positive, rather than emphasizing fear and suspicion. The culture and tone shaped by leaders make all the difference. Give some examples that involve not only the way adults treat students, but also how students treat each other. Throughout the trip, take a few minutes every day or every other day to briefly remind the students of a couple of these key points about safety. Another full talk is not needed, but a brief reminder can help keep these important issues on the front burner and discourage and deter anyone inclined to test boundaries.

## APPENDIX 12: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SAFETY TALKS<sup>5</sup>

Safety talks are an important way to raise the level of safety in your church. A safety talk gives important information to children and students about the safe behaviors expected from adults and minors at the church. Bad actors would prefer minors have no education and empowerment surrounding abuse. This alone may serve as a deterrent to some offenders. Also, critically, this will help socialize children into healthy behaviors toward their peers and younger children. This is essential, as a lot of concerning behavior and even abuse is committed against minors by other minors. Implementing regular safety talks helps work against all these realities. It is important to realize that educating children cannot prevent a determined adult or older child from committing offenses. However, implementing safety talks is an important part of an overall plan of prevention.

GRACE does not typically give safety talks to minors. We believe it is important that children hear this information from someone they know and who will likely be there in the following weeks. It is also important for leaders to develop this as a skill because a safety talk does not need to be a one-time event but a regular conversation.

This brief summary will give you some ideas and direction about how to implement safety talks in your context in ways that will connect with your elementary-age kids and students. If you are already engaged in GRACE's Safe Church Initiative, direct consultation on safety talks is included in your agreement with GRACE. If not, this can easily be arranged if you reach out to us via email or through our website.

### **Safety Talk Keys to Consider**

***Try a simple approach and learn as you go:*** This may be something you have never done before and may seem like an intimidating task. This is understandable. GRACE recommends starting with a simple approach and learning from the experience. For elementary-age kids, one simple approach is getting a few recommended books and reading through them together over a few weeks. For students one approach might be a very simple and direct 10-minute talk about safety (see below for more details).

***Engage parents:*** It is powerful when kids and students hear the same messages about safety at church and home. If possible, have your church get some copies of children's books on these topics and give them to parents or make them easy for parents to access. Help parents understand that they can support prevention by reading these books to their children. In addition, help them understand that they don't have to be an expert; they just have to do something they already know how to do: read a book to their kids. For older students especially, we can provide more detailed resources that can help parents support students as they grow with more difficult issues such as online safety and safety in

---

<sup>5</sup> This is a resource developed by GRACE ([netgrace.org](http://netgrace.org)).

relationships (see below for specific resources). Consider getting parental consent forms in advance of any safety talks and use that as an opportunity to encourage parents to be proactive in talking to their children themselves.

***Repeat safety talks regularly:*** Mentioning safety once a year does very little good. If this is a priority, revisit key points often enough to communicate your heart for safety. You don't have to repeat a full safety talk every week, but you can revisit its most important aspects in powerful ways without taking a lot of time to do so. It is especially critical to repeat a safety talk when you are doing a more high-risk activity such as an overnight event or a trip.

***Put information on their level :*** An excellent aspect of starting with books for elementary-age kids is that the material is already written on their level. Do your best with middle- and high-school-age students to also put material on their level in a way they can understand. The best approach is to be serious and direct. However, "serious" does not mean "scary." It is better to be positive and show the students you respect them enough to speak directly to them about this important topic.

***As you get comfortable, add further information:*** As you gain more confidence, you can add further information, especially for older students, about online safety, healthy relationships, cyberbullying, sextortion,<sup>6</sup> etc. Don't worry about being an expert on these topics. There are excellent resources available on many of these topics. The key is to get a basic talk established and as you grow in your skill you can add further information.

### **Getting Started with Elementary-Age Kids**

The simplest way to start with elementary-age kids is to get a few good books on this topic and read them to the kids. Consider starting with these five:

- *God Made All of Me* by Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb.
- *My Body! What I Say Goes!* by Jayneen Sanders.
- *I Said No! A Kid-to-Kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private* by Zack and Kimberly King.
- *Let's Talk About Body Boundaries, Consent, and Respect* by Jayneen Sanders.
- *No Means No!* by Jayneen Sanders.

It is a good idea to use a team to decide on a good approach for your church. Try it and learn from it. Then keep going, as the key is to make this a sustainable practice.

---

<sup>6</sup> Sextortion is "A type of blackmail used by offenders to acquire additional sexual content from the child, coerce them into engaging in sexual activity, or to obtain money from the child." See the education sheet: "[Sextortion: Parents Should Know](#)" from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2024.

Experts recommend focusing on a few essential ideas with kids in elementary school. How you express these essentials will depend on your context. Beyond these books, there are other resources available that can guide you (see more below).

Kids need to hear:

- Messages that affirm their inherent dignity and value and image bearers of God.
- God wants each person to be safe and treated with respect.
- Your church leaders want each person to be safe and treated with respect.
- Our bodies are special, and some parts of our body are private. They are usually covered and not shared with or touched by others.
- Correct names for private areas of the body: buttocks, penis, vulva, breasts, etc. This communicates that while these parts are private, they are not shameful. We can talk about the proper name. This also helps children speak accurately if they need to disclose something that happened.
- Concrete examples of safe behaviors. Talk about the policy boundaries for your church with regard to touch, words, isolation, bathrooms, etc. Tell that this is how the adults and older kids are expected to treat them. Tell them this is how they are to respect their peers and younger kids. God cares deeply about how we treat each other.
- The difference between a surprise and a secret (a secret is often about someone being hurt, a surprise is something fun that is only kept from a person for a time, so it is fun when they are surprised).
- The difference between tattling and telling (tattling is done to get someone in trouble, telling is to help someone in trouble). Tell children they will never get in trouble for telling about someone touching private parts or hurting someone.
- They can talk to a trusted adult if someone is not following safe behaviors. Talk about what a trusted adult is. Ask them about who the trusted adults are in their life. Help them identify those people very specifically; this gives them empowerment to speak up. Tell them they will never get in trouble for speaking up to a trusted adult.

### **Getting Started with Students (Middle School and High School)**

GRACE recommends you start with a very simple and direct talk. A simple outline might cover these four areas:

1. Connect this to our Christian faith.
2. Give them some basic education.
3. Clarify safe and healthy behaviors.
4. Encourage them to speak up if they need help.

If you have had training from GRACE, you could pull out a few simple ideas from the training for the middle school and high school groups. Again, the key is to think about your context and put things in a way that will be easily understood. Try it, learn and then keep at it. The effort is worth it. Here are a few thoughts about each of these areas, where you might start and where you might go once you get more comfortable:

1. Connect this to our Christian faith.
  - God created us with inherent dignity.
  - God cares that we are safe and treated with respect. As leaders we care deeply that this is a place of safety and respect. All of us play a role in that.
  - God talks about power and using power to harm others. God stands against abuses of power in the Bible. Jesus spoke against child abuse, elder abuse, financial abuse, spiritual abuse, pastor abuse, etc.
2. Give them some basic education.
  - Abuse is using power and trust to gain access and then using that relationship to exploit someone in some way: sexually, physically, emotionally, financially, spiritually, etc.
  - Give some concrete examples of emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, etc., and invite questions if that seems needed. (Again, you may use the diocesan training or other resources or find someone to help you if you need it.)
  - Many who abuse power are adults who hold a position of power and trust such as a parent, teacher, coach, pastor, student volunteer, etc. Older minors can also commit abuse.
  - Abusers live a double life – most are people we wouldn't expect to ever do that kind of thing. (Jesus talked about such a person being like a wolf in sheep's clothing.)
  - Abuse is a person sinning against another person, not two people sinning together. Abuse involves a perpetrator and a victim.
  - Abuse is usually not just a sin, but also a crime. It is a very serious matter.
3. Clarify safe and healthy behaviors.
  - This is how we expect adults to treat you regarding touch, isolation, words, sharing content/messaging, etc. (Give a concrete example and invite questions.)
  - This is how we expect you to treat your peers and younger kids.
4. Encourage them to speak up if they need help.
  - It can be hard to speak up. We might be scared about what will happen. We might wonder if we will be believed and supported. We might be afraid we will get in trouble. This is normal.
  - Talk to a trusted adult as soon as you can. Keep talking until someone helps you. If you feel more comfortable talking to a friend, that is OK. Together you can support each other and go to a trusted adult.

## Further Resources for Churches and Parents

GRACE has developed thorough safety talks with a PowerPoint and script. While GRACE does not recommend using these as your first safety talk, they may be useful as a reference for ideas or examples of how you might express particular ideas.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children has two programs called NetSmartz and KidsSmartz for safety with tip sheets, videos, discussion guides and other helpful resources. In our opinion, the information in NetSmartz about online safety is especially helpful. You can see all of the resources here: [missingkids.org/netsmartz/resources](http://missingkids.org/netsmartz/resources).

Here are some previously mentioned and further resources:

- *God Made All of Me* by Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb.
- *My Body! What I Say Goes!* by Jayneen Sanders.
- *I Said No! A Kid-to-Kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private* by Zack and Kimberly King.
- *Let's Talk About Body Boundaries, Consent, & Respect* by Jayneen Sanders.
- *No Means No!* by Jayneen Sanders.
- *God Made Me in His Image: Helping Children Appreciate Their Bodies* by Justin S. Holcomb and Lindsey A. Holcomb.
- *How Much Is a Little Girl Worth?* by Rachael Denhollander.
- *How Much Is a Little Boy Worth?* By Rachael Denhollander and Jacob Denhollander.
- *Listening to My Body* by Gabi Garcia.
- *Body Safety Education: A Parent's Guide to Protecting Kids from Sexual Abuse* by Jayneen Sanders.
- *When Your Child Discloses Sexual Abuse* by Chris Schopen.
- NetSmartz by The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: [missingkids.org/netsmartz/home](http://missingkids.org/netsmartz/home).
- The Mama Bear Effect: [themamabeareffect.org/](http://themamabeareffect.org/).

Once again, if you are already engaged in GRACE's Safe Church Initiative, direct consultation on safety talks is included in your agreement with GRACE. If not, this can easily be arranged if you reach out to us via email or through our website.

## APPENDIX 13: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORTING A VICTIM OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE TERRORISM<sup>7</sup>

These are some practical words of advice if you are in the position to provide support to someone experiencing intimate partner violence terrorism. An excellent guide to help you and give you further information is the book *Helping Her Get Free* by Susan Brewster. As with any survivor, communicating belief and support is essential. Pay attention to your words as well as your body language and validate their experience. Do your very best to avoid any form of victim-blaming or minimizing the abuse. Communicate clearly that there is no excuse for any form of abuse, ever.

### *Be aware they may be being monitored.*

Many abusers closely monitor their spouse when they are around others who could intervene. Pay attention to whether their spouse is present. Ask if this is a good time to talk or what might be a good time to talk or text. You may want to come up with a code to signal it is OK to talk or text. Help them think about taking precautions like deleting texts.

### *Check in regularly if possible.*

Those who are experiencing abuse in a relationship need someone who can serve as a contrast to the demeaning treatment in the abuse. It helps a survivor realize there are others who care deeply and can help them. You may want to ask how often it would be helpful to check in. Give them choices and respect their agency.

### *Ask about their safety.*

The first concern for someone experiencing abuse is always safety. It is important that a survivor experiencing abuse make a safety plan.<sup>8</sup> A local domestic violence shelter will often be able to help with this, or you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (see below). Advocates like these can also help a survivor assess the risk of violence given their circumstances. We should not take on this role without training; however, it is a good idea to ask them how safe they feel at home right now. You can say, “On a scale of 1 to 3, with 1 being ‘Things aren’t great, but I feel safe,’ and 3 being ‘I am afraid for my life,’ how safe would you say you feel right now?” If they answer 2 or 3, it is urgent to try to connect them with local domestic violence resources to address safety.

---

<sup>7</sup> This is a practical resource developed by GRACE ([netgrace.org](http://netgrace.org)).

<sup>8</sup> From the National Domestic Violence Hotline ([thehotline.org/what-is-a-safety-plan/](http://thehotline.org/what-is-a-safety-plan/)): “A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan to improve your safety while experiencing abuse, preparing to leave an abusive situation, or after you leave. This plan includes vital information tailored to your unique situation and will help you prepare for and respond to different scenarios, including telling your friends and family about your situation, coping with emotions, and various resources suited to your individual circumstances.” You may call this hotline 24/7 to have a highly trained advocate help you create a personalized safety plan: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). You can also text START to 88788.

Offer to connect them to resources.

Some survivors may not be aware of resources that can help them. Some may be reluctant to access resources. You can try to help ease the discomfort of reaching out for help. It is important to know which county or counties a local domestic violence shelter serves and what types of services they offer. You can look online or call them. If possible, go and see for yourself. When you recommend a resource, it is important that the resource be able to serve that survivor. If possible, offer to make the call with the person or help them get there in person. Marriage counseling is not appropriate when abuse is suspected.<sup>9</sup> Individual counseling or therapy is important, and it is highly recommended that the therapy/counseling is with a licensed professional who has extensive experience or specializes in helping survivors of abuse. Please note: Clergy must follow diocesan guidelines for the limitations for meeting with an individual for counseling; however, this does not preclude clergy from regularly checking in with a person who is experiencing abuse. Please refer to the diocesan canons or reach out to the canon of the ordinary with questions.

Respect their agency in making decisions even if you disagree.

Abusers take away the agency to make choices from a survivor. It is critical that we empower and respect the agency of a survivor. If we start to direct the life of a survivor, even though our intentions are not abusive, this is not healthy. Ignoring the problem is one extreme, but the other extreme is to think we can be someone's rescuer if we just take on the role of directing their life. Experts understand that survivors who leave abuse will almost always return unless it is their decision to leave and seek safety. Respecting their agency also means protecting their privacy with regard to their story. It is important to ask permission before speaking with others about their situation.

Confront denial and minimizing firmly but gently.

Some survivors have spent so many years immersed in the abuse that they have adopted the perspective of the abuser over time. It is important that you are prepared to understand that some survivors blame themselves, minimize the abuse or offer excuses for their spouse. It is good to counter this reality, but also to show you understand that it is impossible to live and breathe this twisted reality for years without having it warp your perspective.

Educate yourself on intimate partner violence and share what you learn.<sup>10</sup>

It is often essential for a survivor to learn more about the reality of intimate partner violence as an empowering step toward getting free from abuse. Educate yourself and share what you are learning as appropriate. It may well make the difference. Share that abuse is calculated behavior by an abuser. Share about the Wheel of Power and Control (see below). Share that abusers rarely stop without

---

<sup>9</sup> Among many other reasons, marriage counseling typically carries the assumption that any issues are mutual, but that is not the case with abuse. It also typically assumes that both individuals are coming in good faith, and this helps abusers continue to manipulate and blame others. Many survivors will not feel safe to be honest in marriage counseling, knowing they may pay a price later through retaliation.

<sup>10</sup> An excellent book to educate yourself on intimate partner violence is *Why Does He Do That?* by Lundy Bancroft.

significant intervention and accountability. Share about the cycle of abuse. Share about the impacts of abuse. Share that Jesus came to set people free from abuse.

#### Ask how you can help.

Listen carefully to what they are dealing with and what they need. Try to do what you can. Offer to show up with them to an appointment or in court or in other ways. Remember your limits and try to engage other resources as needed with their permission.

#### Count the cost of helping.

It is also important not to underestimate the danger an abuser may pose when we help a survivor. Advocates are trained to assess risk, and it is not usually advisable to try to take on that role ourselves. However, it is good for us to know a few basics. The highest risk for homicide to a survivor, statistically speaking, is when they are trying to leave their abuser. For this reason, it is not advisable to have the survivor stay at your house if there is any risk of physical violence. A shelter or hotel is usually a better option. Trained advocates are the best options for assessing risk, but it is OK to ask if their partner has ever threatened to kill them, has access to a weapon, has ever choked them or has ever been physically violent. Any of these would indicate significant risk.

#### Practice self-care.

It is critical to care for yourself so you can offer help in a sustained way. When we help someone in abuse, that trauma has an impact on our life that is usually not apparent until the impact affects quality of life. Experts call this secondary traumatic stress or vicarious trauma. Self-care is essential when we are helping in a situation that leads to high levels of secondary traumatic stress.

#### Further Resources

Here are some previously mentioned and further resources:

- *Why Does He Do That?* by Lundy Bancroft.
- *Helping Her Get Free* by Susan Brewster.
- *Is It My Fault? Hope and Healing for those Suffering Domestic Violence* by Justin Holcomb & Lindsey Holcomb, with Elyse M. Fitzpatrick.
- The Duluth Model Wheel of Power and Control: [theduluthmodel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PowerandControl.pdf](http://theduluthmodel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/PowerandControl.pdf).
- *Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse* by Marie M. Fortune.
- *No Place for Abuse: Biblical and Practical Resources to Counteract Domestic Violence* by Catherine Clark Kroeger and Nancy Nason-Clark.
- *Refuge from Abuse: Healing and Hope for Abused Christian Women* by Nancy Nason-Clark and Catherine Clark Kroeger.
- *The Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize It and How to Respond* by Patricia Evans.

- *Religion and Intimate Partner Violence: Understanding Challenges and Proposing Solutions* by Nancy Nason-Clark, Barbara Fisher-Townsend, Catherine Holtmann and Stephen McMullin.
- *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church's Response* by Pamela Cooper-White.

## APPENDIX 14: EXAMPLE, LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT

This limited access agreement is to clarify accountable behavior in our community for \_\_\_\_\_ (name). Our desire to disciple others in the way of Jesus requires us to hold all in our community to a high level of accountability toward those who are vulnerable, including children. \_\_\_\_\_ being a member of our church, we share a responsibility to hold (him/her) accountable for their behavior toward those who are vulnerable. This agreement formalizes specific accountability for \_\_\_\_\_.

The following behaviors have been observed:

- Hugging children when the hugs were not welcomed by the children.
- Focusing a lot of attention on children even without any formal responsibilities with children.
- Initiating games with children involving a lot of touch.

These observations have given us reason to be concerned about your interactions with children. Our church prioritizes clear boundaries surrounding interaction with children, and this agreement is part of formalizing accountability for \_\_\_\_\_ in specific areas.

The continued presence of \_\_\_\_\_ in our community will be dependent upon exemplary behavior concerning our policy's boundaries as well as the following specific requirements both in and outside of church gatherings:

- No initiation of physical contact with minors (anyone under 18) or high school students.
- No initiation of conversation with minors (anyone under 18) or high school students.
- No going into the children's wing of the church or other areas of the church outside of the sanctuary, foyer, fellowship hall or main restrooms, without a specific purpose and in the company of a member of the Parish Safe Church Team.

This limited access agreement will be evaluated (quarterly or biannually) by our Parish Safe Church Team.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name), understand the seriousness of my conduct and acknowledge that further crossing of these or other appropriate boundaries (including, but not limited to, our policy's standards of conduct) may result in further formal discipline up to and including removal from membership and not being able to participate in this church community.

Signature of Individual: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Safe Church Team Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Safe Church Team Member Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Agreement: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 15 - DOCUMENTATION FORM FOR KNOWLEDGE OF SUSPECTED/ DISCLOSED ABUSE

*This is a general form to be filled out and submitted to a Safety Team after knowledge of suspected abuse comes to light (and after a report is made to the proper authorities when that is appropriate in cases of child or vulnerable adult abuse). A member of the Safety Team may fill this out with a person with such information if they prefer.*

Name of person(s) filling out form: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the situation in as much detail as you can, including names, dates, how this came to light and other details as much as possible: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Reporting victim's name and age: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person accused of abuse, if known: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):

---

If this has been reported, detail who, when and where this was reported: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

If the reporting victim is a minor, date/time child's parent/guardian was notified (Do not contact the family if the suspected abuser is a family member): \_\_\_\_\_

---

Person who contacted family: \_\_\_\_\_

Family member contacted: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of conversation: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Other relevant notes: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Other action taken: \_\_\_\_\_

Documentation of Parish/Diocesan Safety Team actions (care team, connecting with local resources, boundaries set with alleged offender, contacting parish or diocesan leaders, etc.):

---

---

---

Significant Update (Date/Summary of Update):

---

---

---

Significant Update (Date/Summary of Update):

---

---

---

Significant Update (Date/Summary of Update):

## APPENDIX 16: KNOWN OFFENDER ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

This agreement is entered into by the leaders of \_\_\_\_\_ Parish and \_\_\_\_\_ (name). As a person with a history of abuse, the following requirements are agreed upon as a condition for limited participation.

The following requirements have been agreed to in consultation with [as applicable]:

- [parole/probation officer].
- [treatment provider/counselor].
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parish Safe Church Team.

The following general requirements are agreed to:

- Remaining in treatment.
- Following all court requirements.
- Regular meetings.
- Following all policies of \_\_\_\_\_ Parish.
- Following the specifics of this Accountability Plan..
- Full transparency about the extent of my offenses, including reporting offenses for which there may be criminal charges.

Settings where the person is allowed to participate:

- [To be decided based on the specifics of the situation.]

Key Expectations During Participation:

- [To be decided based on the specifics of the situation.]

Key Expectations Outside of Participation:

- [To be decided based on the specifics of the situation.]

I, \_\_\_\_\_, (name) agree to this accountability plan. I acknowledge that any deviation from this plan means further accountability measures up to and including not being allowed to participate in further parish activities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parish Name and Signature Date

Key resources for ministry to Known Offenders (these articles are available on the diocesan website):

- [“Ministering to Adult Sex Offenders: Ten Lessons from Henry Gerecke”](#) by Victor Vieth.
- [“What Would Walther Do? Applying Law and Gospel to Victims and Perpetrators of Child Sexual Abuse”](#) by Victor Vieth.
- [“Understanding and Working with Adult Sex Offenders in the Church”](#) by Cory Jewell Jensen.
- [“Sex Offenders in the Church: From Apathy to Action”](#) by Lynette Frantzen.
- [“Understanding and Responding to the Impacts of Child Sexual Abuse Images Online”](#) (GRACE resource).

## APPENDIX 17: KEY ASSIGNMENT AGREEMENT

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Position/Reason for having a key: \_\_\_\_\_

Check One:

I am  employee  a volunteer  other

(specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please initial each item below indicating your agreement:

I will not lend or give this key to anyone, including a family member, nor will I make a copy.

I agree promptly to return the key when I no longer have a valid use for it or when requested by the rector/vicar or other appropriate official.

I have completed an application, including at least three references, and have had an interview.

I agree to the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Youth.

I have already completed the appropriate level of training as required by this policy.

OR

I agree to participate in the above training within the next six months.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX 18: SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR PROVIDING COUNSELING

- Follow the diocesan canons that limit the number of sessions, consult the canons or reach out to the canon of the ordinary if you have questions.
- Don't go outside your area of expertise. Refer to a psychologist, credentialed professional, medical doctor or mental health professional.
- Even if you are separately credentialed and/or licensed as a mental health professional (psychologist, marriage and family therapist, substance abuse counselor, etc.), while you are functioning on behalf of the church you should:
  1. Make it clear to those you are serving that you are NOT serving in that role.
  2. If you function in that role while you are also functioning on behalf of the church, you should clearly separate those two roles by where you practice each and clearly communicate to all concerned about when you are functioning in each role.
  3. You must maintain in full force adequate professional insurance at all times for any work you do outside your church role covering general liability, including coverage for sexual misconduct, in an amount set by the Diocesan Board, and with an insurance company approved by the Diocesan Board and naming your church employer or church for whom you function in pastoral relationships as an additional insured.
  4. You must provide evidence of such insurance to your church employer or church for which you function in pastoral relationships annually.

## APPENDIX 19: SUGGESTED GUIDELINES FOR OFFICE DECOR

Spaces where pastoral relationships occur should be a relaxing and productive setting, ready at all times for use for pastoral relationships. The following are recommendations that will help create an environment that is peaceful and private while allowing appropriate supervision.

***Furniture:*** Comfortable chairs set at a 45-degree angle from each other create a good area for conversation. Couches and loveseats are discouraged, but if they are used, persons who have pastoral relationships should not sit on them with parishioners or other visitors.

***Artwork:*** Artwork should be tasteful without offending the staff or other visitors.

***Windows:*** Windows in walls or doors should be unobstructed by blinds, furniture, curtains or posters so the space is always available to casual monitoring. A sense of privacy can be maintained by arranging the furniture so persons who have pastoral relationships are always visible, but the parishioner or visitor does not feel exposed.

***Entrances:*** If the space has a private entrance, and it is used, be sure staff know when someone is in the space and when it is being used for pastoral relationships.